

**FAITHFULNESS IN CHANGE:
EMPOWERING THE LAITY FOR DECISION MAKING**

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ABSTRACT

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by

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This project seeks to address how effective leadership principles can help empower a small membership church resolve the issue of church relocation. The dialogue sessions serve as examples of how effective leadership principles inform the life of the congregation and empower the church to set direction for the future. In the sessions, members evaluated policies and procedures, analyzed information and expressed various opinions in relation to the proposed move. In essence, the members evaluated the total mission and ministry of the church. Results of the model show that effective leadership principles gave members the resources and opportunity they needed to decide effectively a course for lay empowerment.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my mom, DeLois Elaine Beck; dad, Mayor Saul Lenor Beck; sons, Dameon Arnaz and Therron LaVell Hughes; and my loving grandchildren, Dameon II, and DaNeisha Hughes; and my sister LaRue Diane Walker.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

How often is one given an opportunity to change, to evaluate a proposed move, to prevent a split, to keep people motivated and to re-organize a church at one time? It seems impossible that something good or great can come from such a challenge. Many ministers and leaders would have said, "No way!" "This is craziness," and would immediately have asked to be reassigned. To me, it became a challenge and opportunity to grow, to learn, and to see if I could help manifest change and build up the congregation's self-esteem.

I remembered a quote from Goethe:

The important thing in life is to
have a great aim and possess the aptitude
and perseverance to attain it.¹

Goethe's statement is true as we look at the life, mission, and ministry of our congregations. Vital ministry in any congregation is contingent upon the minister's and leaders' aptitude to faithfully lead, a willingness to take risk when it is unfavorable, and the perseverance to withstand the stresses and opportunities

¹Philip Wayne, *Faust* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1993), 143.

leadership affords them. This concept implies an operative belief system which affirms that God will deliver and give direction.

Edwin Friedman in his book, *Generation to Generation*, states, "an organism tends to function best when its 'head' is well differentiated." The key to successful spiritual leadership, therefore, with success understood not only moving people toward a goal, but also in terms of the survival of the family (and its leader), has largely to do with the leader's capacity for self-definition."²

Therefore, this project was borne out of that challenge to me as the pastor and the members of the congregation who were seeking to find answers and means to make a decision as to move or not to move to a new location. We saw this as a daring adventure, to dream, to brainstorm, and to re-evaluate where we were in ministry.

In this document, the writer seeks to discuss the processes that one needs to undertake when implementing leadership principles to make any decision in the life of the church. Highlighted are key issues, opportunities, and learning experiences leaders will struggle or wrestle with in order to make major decisions which will precipitate change and challenges in the life of a church. The reader will be informed of the fact-finding and information-gathering process for the pertinent

²Edwin Freidman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1985), 221.

information and procedures the pastor, leadership and members must work through before saying, "we are going to move." This document makes clear the importance and necessity for the pastor and leadership of the congregation to have a working relationship upon which communication and trust can be established in order to have an open relationship with one another throughout the process. This is vital since the leaders of the church must help to impart the vision and develop plans to carry out the project. During the initial stages of development, it is imperative that a strict set of guidelines be developed, so as to steer them through the entire process. These plans will serve as a means to gauge whether progress is being made. There must be checkpoints to see if there are areas which need to be defined, redefined, or added. This document also endeavors to show how important it is to know the history of a congregation in communicating effectively and keeping the members connected throughout the adventure. Knowing the historical background of the congregation helps the pastor and leaders to develop effective means of disseminating material and communicating to the church community the relevance of the project and helps to get faith commitments from members.

At the outset of the project, one must ask: (1) Are we ready for such an undertaking? (2) What is it that we want to do? (3) Has God given us this vision, or is the vision ours or someone else's? (4) Do we understand the vision? (5) Do we

know what the vision is actually saying and its implications in the life and ministry of the congregation and its members?

New challenges and opportunities and learning experiences are always an adventure for all interested parties. It allows God's children to grow and see what their actual strengths and potentials are in the ministries of daily living and the life of the universal church. New experiences provide a new spiritual awakening and renewal of a church and its congregants. Our God-given talents are affirmed, the powers, the potentialities which enable us to claim our victories.

The purpose of this particular unit is to discuss faith and perseverance in the midst of a major decision. It addresses possible means for leaders to become empowered and feel confident in making major decisions as they relate to the life of a church. It seeks to address how an incoming pastor may begin to comprehend where the congregation stands and how it handles conflicts and challenges in the midst of making a major decision, or in following through on a major project.

This document seeks to highlight: (1) how to go about establishing a proposal, (2) how one can give reconciliation the best chance to avoid a split, (3) pitfalls to look for when planning a move, (4) things to be observed in a new church, (5) what to expect when a church says it is going to move, (6) the importance of understanding that visions cannot be produced or actualized unless ground work has been laid, (7) the pastor and congregation must have a strong understanding of faith and a strong faith commitment (8) ideas that will help the congregation ask

themselves if they are an apathetic church or pro-active church (moving the congregation from apathy to activity (9) helping leaders to understand that they can not begin to lead until they are able to take a deeper look at themselves, and (10) formulation of who, what, where, how questions relating to resources and support people needed throughout the endeavor.

As in any major decision, we must address issues that relate to: (1) communication (staying connected, establishing trust and faith in one another); (2) recognizing the possibility of opposition and knowing how to handle it, (3) decision making (leader or pastor voicing their opinions and backing off) allowing membership to make theirs, (4) learning how to celebrate at every phase of the project (motivational techniques) to keep members interested and committed to the effort.

By going through these preliminary steps and learning processes, the pastor and leadership of the church will be better able to make conscious efforts at re-organizing themselves, and to re-center their efforts without pointing fingers, being judgmental, or placing blame. The pastor and people must recognize that it is better to start where they are and move forward. When we initiate these steps we are taking a pro-active approach to ministry and opening doors which enable communication to take place, involve the entire congregation. When leadership recognizes that their approach to people is negative, they must seek new ways of

communicating, and begin to seek God for guidance and depend upon the Holy Spirit to lead and direct their actions.

Edwin Friedman would say, "If a leader will take primary responsibility for his or her own position as 'head' and work to define his or her own goals and self, while staying in touch with the rest of the organism, there is a more than reasonable chance that the body will follow."³

In other words, when a leader defines him or herself they are able to take an objective stance and not simply react to the content issues that are presented. When a non-reactive approach to ministry is employed members are less apt to be resistant to change, and are open to hear new ideas. Congregants are offered a positive means of handling content issues and inadvertently learning how to deal with process (what is right versus who or what is wrong).

³Ibid., 229.

CHAPTER II

LOOKING THROUGH THE MIRROR DARKLY AT LIFE'S JOURNEY

The Self

Life is like building a house. There are steps, processes and stages that we must go through before we can see the finished product. At every step, we pause, look at the progress and ask ourselves, "are there any rough edges we need to smooth out, or pieces that have been omitted," and we go back over them until it is pleasing and meets the mind's eye. Life is the same way. Although we cannot go back and smooth out the rough places, we can look at situations and circumstances, learn from them to become better persons, and prayerfully become the happy, holistic people God intended us to be.

As I reflect upon the last 45 years, there have been many high mountains, low valleys and long, dark tunnels that seemed unending. The guiding hands and the spirit of God have brought me through it all. These experiences have rebuilt me, by repeatedly breaking up and remolding, to become the instrument of love that God wishes me to be. Yet I know God is not through with me. I have come to realize that all of life's experiences and challenges make up the total of who we are and what we are to become. Many things have transpired in my life, and in this

writing I will highlight those events that I feel have had the most impact upon me and helping to develop my leadership techniques.

It all began one spring morning, specifically on April 10, 1950, at 1140 Berkeley Avenue, in the small village of Ford Heights, Illinois (a/k/a East Chicago Heights), which is my maternal grandmother's home. I was born to Saul Lenor and DeLois Elaine Bickham Beck. I am the second oldest of five children. My birth was a very difficult delivery for my mom. Complications began during the delivery. Instead of coming head first, I came breached. The umbilical cord was wrapped around my neck three times, causing my brain to get little or no oxygen, giving me little hope of survival. My skin's color was blue-black. Due to the quick thinking and skill of the midwife, Mother Carrie, under the guidance of Dr. Hayes, and her working continuously with me and never giving up, I lived.

In a time when breach babies were not expected to live, I defied all medical science and odds, because I was brought back to life through prayer, quick hands, thinking, and the "GRACE OF GOD." From that day on in my mom's heart she felt that the Lord had a special purpose for her child, but did not know quite what it was at that point.

Spending time outdoors was my favorite pastime. I would sit under a tree, feel the bright sunshine on my face and read a good book while the other children jumped rope ("double dutch"), played ball, roller skated, played jacks, hopscotch and rode bicycles.

Even though I liked life plain and simple, I was quick with my tongue and my thoughts. "What came up came out," and most of the time this got me in trouble.

The neighborhood in which I grew up in consisted of our relatives, very close friends, and extended families. For the most part, our family was different from the rest of our relatives. Mom and Dad had their rules and boundaries as to where we could play and with whom we could play. My maternal grandmother's yard was the largest, so we played in her yard most of the time. My friends and I played "Simon said," dodge ball, baseball, "Red Rosie," volleyball, and hopscotch. I learned how to ride a bicycle and jump "double dutch" by the time I was twelve years old. Once I got with the program of learning how to play with the children, I really began to enjoy them.

When I was three years old, I began to spend the weekends with my great-uncle and his wife, who lived in Chicago Heights, Illinois, approximately five minutes away from East Chicago Heights. Chicago Heights is a much bigger community than East Heights. After Aunt Algae died, my uncle remarried. From about four years old, I spent most of my growing years with my uncle and aunt.

I had two friends who also lived on Fifth Avenue. All of us later moved to Portland Avenue due to the urban renewal renovations. We all attended St. James C.M.E. Church. We ate and basically went everywhere together. I had very little dealings with my own siblings. During the week, when I was at home with my parents, I stayed in the room that I shared with my sister. I loved to read and play

by myself when I wasn't reading or daydreaming. Many times I was with the older adults at the church participating in church activities. I loved the older adults because I could listen and learn from them and they accepted me as I was. I did not have to compete for attention or be bothered with peer pressure. I was "Little Macie Jewel." I did not like to do the things my sister and brothers liked to do such as roller skating, movies, football, and basketball. I refused to interact with them because it was boring to me. I basically grew up as a loner and an only child of my uncle because he never had any children of his own.

My uncle to me was my best friend, confidant, and buddy. We could talk to one another about any and everything. My parents and I grew farther and farther apart at this time. I had the feeling that my parents did not love or care about me and that they showed favoritism toward my sister Diane. It seemed that my mom would cater to Diane, and due to these feelings we never got along. Diane and the rest of my family, as well as their friends, would call me mean and evil and refer to me as the "ugly duckling." They were afraid of me.

I was very particular about my books and other possessions, and if anyone would disturb them, I would get upset and tell them off or fight them and this often resulted in a whipping for me. Fighting for me did not come naturally. It came about after many threats of being spanked because I would let other children beat me up and I would run home crying. One day my grandmother said, "If you come

home one more time crying about someone hitting you, I am going to whip you for letting them." I knew she would do it, so I began to protect myself.

I was a very independent, self-reliant and stubborn child. No matter what happened in my life, I believed that everything would work itself out.

I did not mind getting a whipping, especially when I knew I was right and the rest of the children were wrong. I would get angry and upset at my parents because they would believe the others over me. Being stubborn, I would not cry. I would just stand there until they finished and went immediately to my room. I would say to myself, "I'll be going to Uncle's on the weekend and I can tell him what Mom and Dad are doing to me." He would protect me. Sometimes I would verbalize that fact to my mom and dad and they would get angry with me and say it is impolite for children to talk back to authority figures. Sometimes when I was acting up and was denied permission to go to Uncle's, I stayed in my room and fantasized that I was not in this world at all, that I lived in a better place where it was peaceful, everybody loved each other and we all lived happy ever after.

Other times I would go over to my grandmother's and talk with her. During this time my great-grandmother would spend the summer with my grandmother and I would sit, watch, and talk with her. We had a lot of fun together. During the Christmas of 1959, all the fun and talks ended. My great-grandmother died and she was not there for me any more.

I grieved a long time for my dear great-granny. No longer did I have an escape partner at home to whom I could talk. I really secluded myself with my books and the church. I wanted to know more and more about this God who would take a nine year old's great- grandmother away from her without any warning, while people continued telling her that God loved her best. There was still hope because I had my uncle and aunt. I had the opportunity to visit Uncle's anytime. We would talk and he explained life and its problems to me.

After the death of great-granny, life went on and I grew up and became somewhat mature. During this time I began to learn about the works of God in people's lives. I was trying to understand the purpose of religion and what it means to persons who say they are Christians.

I have several persons to thank for their teaching and allowing me to explore religion at my own pace, helping me to realize that having God is a very important aspect of living and getting along with people in this world. I learned that if we are to make it, it will be by the grace of God, reading, praying and knowing the scriptures which will help us to stick it out until better days roll around until you are able to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Education

School for me was fairly easy. As a matter of fact, when I was in first grade, learning the alphabet, numbers, counting and writing was easy. By the time the teacher gave us the assignment, I would complete it before any of my peers so she

would give me extra work to keep me occupied while the other students finished their work.

Mrs. Royal was a firm and strict teacher. She wanted us to learn all that we could and to do our best. If our minds would wander off the task or we would watch the clock, there was a sign under the clock, "TIME PASSES. WILL YOU?" This would remind us that if we did not get busy and complete our assignments, there was a good possibility that we would end up spending another year in first grade.

I loved Mrs. Royal because she took time with us. She shared family stories and introduced us to one of her friends who was blind. This was my first encounter with a person having a handicap. The young lady visited our classroom and demonstrated her Braille machine. She could read just like us by using Braille. She told us how keen her hearing was and explained that when you lose one of your senses, the others become keener and make up for the lost one.

Mrs. Royal taught us how to appreciate and respect persons who were different. She taught us to realize that no matter what happens in our little lives that instead of taking a defeatist attitude, we should think of the story of the "Little Engine That Could"---"I think I can, I think I can, I know I can." She taught us to remember, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again!" She was a very positive person.

Second grade was not that pleasing or exciting. As a matter of fact, it was a horror story for me. The first day of school, neither one of the second grade teachers wanted me in her class. I was an excellent student, yet neither one of them wanted to take the extra time nor patience to teach me. After several hours of going back and forth from one room to the other, Mrs. James finally conceded. The second grade year officially began.

Mrs. James was nothing like Mrs. Royal who took time to explain everything to us and had the patience of Job when it came to little ones asking every question in the book and maybe under the heavens. She (Mrs. James) would snap at us and tell us to get busy and that we had better make sure there were no erasures or strikeouts on the paper. If there were, we had to start again and make sure our papers were neat, clean and not written on the back side.

Mrs. James was the "neat freak" teacher and our work exemplified it. If we messed up, we knew to start over again. Our work had to be turned in on time or else we were punished for late papers.

As a second grader, my only goal was to bring home good grades. My parents would not accept poor grades since all we had to do was come home, complete our few chores and spend the rest of our time studying. We could then spend a couple of hours watching television and then we went to bed.

I became very paranoid and obsessed with being perfect; in attendance, in academics, in church, and in everything that I did. I accepted nothing less than

perfect, because people did not appreciate lazy children or children who did not do their best. I was afraid of doing unsatisfactory work, because there were unpleasant consequences at school and at home. After graduating from elementary school and taking the pre-high school test for placement, I decided I would not be smart anymore. I made low scores on my placement test so I could be placed in regular classes.

The fall of the year of 1963 came and my brother and I began the ninth grade. We were in the same homeroom and in regular academic classes (which was the college preparatory track). However, as luck would have it, I could not play dumb for long because it showed up in my paperwork. The teachers would soon have a conference with my mother and me. I was moved immediately from the regular to the accelerated academic classes. I still refused to do well the first year and a half until Mom issued the ultimatum: "You either shape up or it's your behind!" I did not like whippings any longer so I started straightening up my act and I managed to stay on the honor roll for all four years, except for one semester.

Even though high school was unpleasant, my parents never knew of my displeasure. My even temperament had given people the impression that I had it all together and everything was all right. However, there was deep pain and misery welling up inside me, which made me feel alone.

Young Adult Life

When you are growing up and living in your parents' home your every dream is to grow up and get out of Mama and Daddy's house. They have to be the meanest and most evil parents that God has ever put on this green earth. We say, "When I get out on my own, they will not have to worry about me and I will not treat my children as they did us." Well, I wanted to get out of my parents' house because my mother and I did not see eye to eye at all. It was her way or no way at all. Somehow we just could not get it together. I suppose that we were too much alike. Sound familiar?

Completing our education was highly stressed in our home. Mom and Dad did not care if it took you 12 years or 30 years. "Be two-suited," Dad would say. Always have an occupation that you can fall back on. For example, if we were going to teach, then we needed to have typing or clerical skills. If we ever found ourselves out of work, we could do either job. I completed Governor's State University in the spring of 1975 with my Bachelor of Arts degree. I chose to continue in the Master's program since I was local and still in the mode of continuing my education. In the spring of 1977, I completed the Master's degree program. I continued to have this thirst for knowledge, to grow and be all I could be, to help my people, and to help us save one another. The only way I saw, to rid our communities of violence, drugs, crime, and self-mutilation was to educate, talk, teach and be a part of helping one another--to claim and reclaim our rich heritage.

Religion

I became acquainted with the church during early infancy. By the time I was six years old, I began to recognize what it was. I attended Sunday school and regular worship service every Sunday. I loved to spend the whole day in worship.

There was always a growing curiosity as to what significant role worship played in our lives and what should I be getting from this church experience? I have always felt that there was more to the Christian religion than what the minister was addressing on Sunday morning. I felt that Jesus had a more significant purpose in our lives. It was more than what the church was offering. I saw people from Sunday to Sunday come and sit in the pews who were in awe, pain, and suffering. They did not know what their role was in the worship service. There were parishioners who could not worship effectively because they were distracted due to pressing issues or problems in their lives. Therefore, I wanted to learn more about this God who my mother and grandmother talked about and put so much trust in.

Seeking Jesus came at the age of 22 after I got a divorce. I wanted to know why God would let bad things happen to good people. If Jesus loves us like the Bible states, then why do people suffer? I also wondered how I could develop an effective prayer life and ascertain this faith that people (Christians) were talking about.

At age 29, I fell and injured my left leg. The doctors thought I had torn a ligament. This incident drew me much closer to an awareness of God and how God works in our lives. During surgery the doctors found three blood clots rather than the torn ligaments. Prior to the surgery, the doctors told me that I would never walk again. I decided that they did not know everything. I took it upon myself to read the Bible, pray and meditate on Jesus. Coupled with determination and physical therapy, I was able to walk again. I began to learn how the Trinity could be incorporated in my daily living to develop my faith which was prevalent in my life.

Moving to Georgia in 1980, little did I know that I would experience a lot of stress in my life and begin to re-affirm the presence of God continually working in and through my life. In the course of a three-year span, I lost my maternal grandmother, a cousin, my oldest brother, an infant cousin, and four dear and beloved close friends. Also during this time span, I acknowledged my call to the ministry and remarried.

During a fall revival in 1982, I accepted the call to the ministry. On the next meeting Sunday (we met on the 2nd & 4th Sundays), I went to the pastor, Rev. Howard Shelton, and informed him of my call. When I mentioned this to him, he seemed appalled and shocked that a female would dare say that the Lord had called her into the ministry. His response to me was, "Go back and tarry and see if that is what the Lord is really saying to you, and if it is, then come back on our next

Sunday and we will talk." Afterwards, he referred me to Rev. Kurtland, president of the Baptist Association and we could go from there. In the meantime, I talked to a teacher friend of mine whose husband was a minister in the United Methodist Church. She told me that the United Methodist Church was ordaining female clergy, and that I could talk to her husband who could give me more details about the process. Rev. Kirby and I sat in his living room and talked about the call to ministry, what it meant, what being a clergy represented and its responsibilities and duties. He stated that if I felt committed to the call, he would be supportive through the process. On the following Sunday, I began attending New Hope United Methodist Church where I joined in October 1982. It was one of the greatest days of my life when I walked down that aisle and joined the congregation. It was as if a burden had been lifted from my shoulders. The process of becoming ordained began.

I wrestled for two years with the decision to attend seminary. During this time my spiritual counselor and prayer partner, Mama Seeley (a teaching colleague and best friend), helped me to get through this most important aspect of my life. She aided me in finding avenues and resources as to how to cope and derive ways of dealing with my family circumstances. She also guided me through the Scriptures and prayed with me to help make my decision to attend seminary. I finally submitted to the will of God and resigned my job to attend seminary full-time.

On August 15, 1984, my two children and I packed the car and left for Atlanta, Georgia. I enrolled in Gammon Seminary of Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) to pursue the Master of Divinity degree. Unfortunately, my husband did not share my dreams and decided he did not want to be married to a woman in the ministry.

These were growing years for me. It was a time when I became mature in the Lord and independent. I learned techniques for dealing with life's difficulties, learning that there was no particular time or thing that we should know. God had His own time in helping us come into a knowledge of Himself and an awareness of who we are in the sight of God. Matriculating at ITC enhanced my level of awareness of the concepts of the Trinity, worship and other aspects that pertain to the Christian religion. It enabled me to further develop my critical and creative thinking skills and re-assess some of my concepts pertaining to my personal theology. Difficult days lay ahead of me. I had to learn how to divide my time equally so that my children would not think that their mom had brought them to Atlanta, Georgia and deserted them. I had shed many tears and felt much guilt because I could not be the "typical" mother. I did not want to be the "typical mother" who stayed at home and waited for her husband to return home from work and dole out the money as he deemed necessary. MACIE was a pioneer and I wanted to trail through the uncharted paths where no one would dare to tread.

My Old Testament professor and I had a difficult time. I would read, reread and reread the Old Testament literature and knew my assignments well. However, when he would call on me, I lost it. Complete fear came over me. I resorted back to my old second grade habits of fear of disappointing my teacher, and not being perfect. He was the kind of instructor who would "bleed" on your paper until you could not see any white anywhere. I felt defeated. I felt that my best was not good enough. One day I asked him to complete a letter of recommendation for me in order to get financial assistance. He said that he would not do it. My feelings were hurt. I got the impression that he did not like me, because he did not wait for my explanation of why I needed the recommendation; he just adamantly said, "No." Several weeks passed before I went to my Old Testament professor to talk with him. When we met, I told him what my fears were. For the first time, I had the courage to confront an older adult and let my fears be known. We had a great talk. He explained to me that it was not anything personal that kept him from writing the letter of recommendation, but he generally did not write for students until he got to know them better. He began to share his observations of me and acknowledged that he thought I was a smart person and one of his favorites. He felt compelled to make certain that I would not just get by, that I should make every effort to become the scholar hidden inside of me. After our conversation, I felt encouraged. The Lord had given me a fresh view of Macie and a chance to begin anew. From that day forward I blossomed and started becoming my own person. The last two years

at seminary, I was a leader (president of the Gammon student fellowship, vice president of our senior class, Internal Campaign Student Leader, and a member of the ITC chorus). I received the Master of Divinity degree on May 9, 1987.

The church as an institution is amazing, amazing to the point that I would not have thought that it would wound its own and then try to step all over them as well. In 1986, I met with the Board of Ordained Ministry to become approved as a probationary member of the North Georgia Annual Conference. I was one of two black females to be ordained that year. It is a known fact that in our conference, this does not happen. I learned that some maneuvering was taking place between the other black female and a board member as to how she could be ordained before me. I realized through this process, that it is not what you know, but it is who you know.

From November 1987 to June 1992, I served as pastor (Summerville Parish), ex-vice president of Murphy-Harpst-Vashti, Inc. (a residential treatment facility for troubled children and youth) from June 1987 to July 1989, and part-time Clinical Chaplain (July 1989-present). In the fall of 1991, I submitted my form to be confirmed for elder's orders. The board convened in March of 1992 to assess each candidate and make recommendations to the Bishop and Cabinet. Even though I had extensive experience, they felt I needed more. I needed to work one full-time year without the other responsibilities. Since there was a lack of Black churches, I was assigned the same duties, which were classified as full-time until something

else came up. The pastor at Marietta Street surrendered his credentials. I was then assigned to Marietta Street, Shady Grove and Murphy-Harpst-Vashti, Inc. (full-time Bishop appointment). I was furious that a system would not accept years of experience served in their process. If the discipline does not spell it out, they will not act. Again my mother and friends helped me through another ordeal.

All my life I felt that the church is the place where the sick come to be healed, the disturbed find peace of mind, the weary find rest, and the broken-hearted are put together again. In the last several years I am of the opinion that the reason why people do not attend church or have respect for the church is because those of us who attend on a regular basis do not respect it. We are particular about who attends, are always arguing, complaining, finding fault and never taking the time to smile or share a kind thought with those in and outside the church. We have the aura of being better than and particular about who will preach to us. I came to this conclusion when I was appointed to the Shady Grove United Methodist Church located in Aragon, Georgia.

Aragon is a small town outside of Rockmart, Georgia (Northwest Georgia) with a population of less than 500. It was not until being appointed there that I realized people still had these antiquated ideas about how women are to be seen and not heard (good old Brother Paul's beginning theology). Also, they thought God did not call women into the ministry. Therefore, if the district superintendent was going to send me to their church, they were going to boycott and padlock the

church. They did not follow through on their words, but the fourth Sunday in June 1992, when I climbed the front steps of Shady Grove Church, I received the coldest and rudest welcome that anyone could ever get. The people refused to sing or participate in the worship experience. I stayed in this situation for five months. I met with the District Superintendent and told him, "If they want a man, give them a pair of pants." I was tired of going to a church to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to persons who were cold, unresponsive and uncaring.

Being the pastor of Shady Grove was a nightmare and a very painful situation. It took much praying, sharing and talking with God to keep my cool and to get the strength to go back Sunday after Sunday, but I made it. I thank God for my best friends and my mother who helped me to get through that ordeal. We spent many long hours and nights talking about what was going on inside of MACIE and how I could turn these sour lemons into lemonade. This was another opportunity to find the good in the experience and use it to grow on.

The World of Work

Being the mayor's daughter and coming back to your hometown to teach can be a blessing or a curse. In my case, it was a curse, and being outspoken intensified that curse. The public school system's hierarchy was apprehensive about hiring me as a teacher. I was qualified, therefore, hired. They also feared the possible community involvement if they did not, because the community was proud to have some of their own return and be a part of the educational system.

On June 7, 1980, my two children and I boarded the plane to Atlanta, Georgia for a fresh start, new surroundings, a breath of fresh air and a new beginning. I was to begin teaching in the fall of the year at Cedar Hill Middle School, located in Cedartown, Georgia.

It was here that I experienced being called a "nigger" by a child. I was in the local grocery store shopping and a four-year old saw me. In my normal mannerism, I said hello and smiled. The child said "Mom, there is a nigger." I was shocked. In the North, racism was subtle, but in the South it was blatant. I had to get used to the language, terminology and the racial slurs. I had a lot to learn about the South. The lesson was just beginning. Most of my life I lived in the North and was somewhat ignorant except for what was on the local news about the racial hatred and bigotry in the South—Blacks and whites being separate (segregation). I assumed a lot when I first came here. It never dawned on me that teachers my age (Black and white) did not attend the same schools. They were not accustomed to people from the North speaking their mind. I had some adjusting to do. I did. I had to get in touch with those feelings of my also being a racist. I did not like to admit that I had some hatred and anger against whites who treated us like dirt and expected us to cater to them. Not only that, I had to prepare myself for the antics that whites in small rural Georgia would pull. In my own way, I knew it was not good to be a racist, but by the same token, I felt it was equally unfair for whites to judge all blacks by the same standards and criteria. I talked to some of my white colleagues about these feelings

and they shared their ideas and opinions about why this little town still operated in an anti-black mode. Not only was the grocery store incident relevant to my awakening knowledge of blatant racism, it became more and more apparent when I became employed at Murphy-Harpst-Vashti (Residential Treatment Facility for Troubled Children and Youth). The president was an undercover racist (by my definition) who pretended to like blacks, but in reality did everything in his power to prove that we were underqualified and incapable of doing the job.

In Search of Self

At 6:00 a.m., October 5, 1981 the telephone rang. I jumped because I knew that on the other end of the receiver the message was not going to be good. It was an ex-school mate calling to tell me that my oldest brother had been killed. He had been shot, a bullet to the temple. He died immediately. This news left me shocked, upset and in awe. So many questions flooded my mind. What do I do? How do I get to my parents right away? How was my mother? What about Daddy? Where is he? Was he out of town? Did he know? Dad was caught off guard. Police officers met him enroute home and told him of the horrible news. He almost freaked out because he felt guilty that he did not do all that he could when he was alive.

We all were angry at the man who shot my brother because he took him away from us. We were unable to say our good-byes and share with him how much we loved him. This made me think and reflect over my life. I did not want to be a

statistic like my brother. I decided that it was time to get myself together and find out if I was harboring feelings of bitterness toward my mother, my siblings, my mother's friend, guilt feelings of taking money from my dad to get his attention, and revengeful feelings for not giving me money when I really needed it, and doing for others and neglecting us. There were feelings of anger toward the court systems for not giving the man life in prison for killing my brother, toward persons who had hurt me, toward Dad because he did not spend time with me. I also had feelings of hatred for the murderer. It was reality check time!

It is a terrible feeling when you are lost and you cannot seem to find your way. You reach out and there isn't anybody there. Everyone you call has something to do. Have you ever had those days and no one seems to care or wants to be bothered with you or your problems? You have to go it alone and you finally decide to turn it over to Jesus. You begin talking to him like you would talk to a friend or family member.

There have been times in my life when I really needed to talk and no one was available. I, often times, felt as if I was a burden and I took a lot out of my friends when they did talk to me. I wanted them to make my decisions for me and if they made them, I could blame them if it did not turn out right. I had to learn how to talk to God for myself and I had to realize God did not care how often or how trivial the question or request. He was available to listen. When a friend told me it took a lot for her to talk to me, that I drained her, I decided that very evening I would

learn how to pray to God simplistically. To me, God did not need any fancy words. All he needed for me to do was tell him where I hurt, and how I felt. Then I would try to leave it with God until He answered or I took time to listen.

I learned valued lessons from all of these feelings of revenge, hatred, anger, and dependence on others. These feelings do not enable us to be responsible and independent. They make us paranoid. Norman Shawchuck in his book, *Leading the Congregation: Caring for Yourself While Serving the People*, states that the care and feeding of the pastor's interior life is not auxiliary to ministry--it is the foundation of ministry. Relying on skills and public persona will last only for a season. The leader's interior life is a far more crucial indicator of what counts. Many pastors become casualties by running away from themselves, and from God, and into their work. But the call of God is first to be a person of prayer, and one who sets up housekeeping in the Word (Acts 6:2, 3). What matters most in being a Christian leader is the interior life, because "the greatest and hardest preparation is within. There is no other way. There are no alternatives to the interior journey of the leader. How we take care of ourselves ultimately relates to and greatly influences our leadership effectiveness."¹

We seek approval and love from outside of ourselves, rather than from inside where all the beauty, creativity, zeal, self-love are stored, waiting to be

¹Norman Shawchuck, *Leading the Congregation: Caring for Yourself While Serving the People* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 28.

released. We look for love in all the wrong places--husbands, wives, children, friends and significant others. They fail us, but the real and true self-love and approval comes from deep inside our being. When we reach out and accept that awareness, we no longer are afraid to be bold and daring and say what's on our minds. We become new creatures. "Old things pass away and behold all things become new." The new awareness of who we are and whose we are becomes more prevalent in our lives.

My matriculation at ITC and continuous counseling helped me to become introspective. I learned how to communicate and relate effectively. I began to recognize my growing edges, getting in touch with and becoming aware of my own creativity and beauty as a black, female, single parent. I completed my break and independence from my parents and gave myself the permission to grow up. In essence, in the last eleven years I have grown from an immature 34-year old girl to a 45-year old adult who tries hard each and every day to trust God for all her answers. I attempt everyday to show someone that Jesus loves them and cares for them. I want people to experience the presence of God here on earth and when they are called from labor to reward, it will be an added blessing.

Herb Miller in his writing of *The Vital Congregation* states, "the attitude and atmosphere of hopefulness is a potent predeterminer of effectiveness in everything a congregation undertakes."² I believe that the church must go back to the basics as

²Herb Miller, *The Vital Congregation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 20.

it relates to people understanding or trying to understand the nature and character of Jesus Christ; not only that, but to perceive how God works in and through our lives on a daily basis. I am a firm believer that people need to be taught, talked with, cared for, and listened to. They need a leader or servant that is willing to go to any length to be with them and to help them see the full picture. The full picture means that God is not a left or right wing God but a God that comes full circle. The Sovereign Lord loves us unconditionally.

A spiritual leader is a person who comes to serve and not to be served. The desire to serve Shawchuck says "must be stronger than the desire to lead--so that leadership becomes a means of serving."³ To become a servant leader, therefore, requires the desire to reflect through our leadership that which we see in God:

That God is beautiful is no secret. It is written on every flower, on the sea and on the mountains. That God is immense is no secret. All you have to do is look at the universe...What is the secret? Here it is: God is a crucified God. God is the God who allow himself to be defeated, God is the God who has revealed himself in the poor. God is the God who has washed my feet, God is Jesus of Nazareth. We are not accustomed to a God like this.⁴

It is not until we come into that realization that we earnestly understand our true call to ministry. Religion to me is serious. It is not to be played with or taken lightly. In order for children, adolescents, and adults to comprehend the things of God, we must exemplify the self-same love and unselfish giving and caring that Jesus exemplified when He was alive and with us.

³Ibid., 35.

⁴Ibid.

I have experienced many failures and disappointments. What I have learned to do is to take those disappointments and circumstances and turn them into opportunities of learning and growing closer to God. I ask God what does this mean for me and how should I go about shouldering my responsibility for a better outcome if this situation should arise again. I always try to turn those lemons into lemonade. It is my firm belief that no one should ever give up, but continue to try or stick with it until they have exhausted all avenues or resources. If you stick with it, God will show you a way to be successful, happy and prosperous.

In *Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now*, Maya Angelou tells the story of Annie Johnson, who reviewed her life journey and made a change: "I looked up the road I was going and back the way I come, and since I wasn't satisfied, I decided to step off the road and cut a new path."⁵

In cutting a new path, I am learning how to stay connected, to communicate what I feel, to respect others and their opinions, to ask for what I need, to be a nonanxious presence, to state my beliefs and back away--to hear what others have to say, to celebrate as often as possible the strides that are being made, to take risks, and to set goals and objectives for myself.

⁵Maya Angelou, *Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993), 22.

Learnings

As I forestated in this document, the sum total of life experiences helps to enhance our creative thinking and allows us to begin to mature. With that thought or concept, the learnings addressed in this paper cannot be attributed to one or two sources, or individuals, but are a culmination of life experiences (personal and non-personal), those of colleagues, family members and friends, readings in psychology, pastoral care and counseling, medical training courses, workshops and seminars, personal (private) counseling sessions, and retreats that dealt with transactual analysis, meditation, yoga, and devotional materials that enhance the spiritual life. Naming of the authors, instructors, and facilitators would go beyond the scope of this paper.

However, learning to communicate (staying connected, establishing trust and faith in individuals), learning strategies and concepts in recognizing opposition and learning how to handle it, learning to make informed decisions and backing off once you have stated or voiced your ideas, and learning how to celebrate at every phase of growth and progress come from a lifetime of reading, searching, praying, and taking long looks at who I am and where I hope to go in the future. It is the above referenced materials, persons, and literature coupled with working with God and God's "amazing grace," that has allowed me to begin the process of becoming a holistic child of God. Therefore, I try to employ these leadership principles in all of my endeavors.

Communication

Communication is vital in everyday life and is one means by which persons can understand one another and establish trust. It must be present for effective dialogue.

The failures in my own personal life with my family, friends, and myself brought me to this realization. I lived in my own world, which further isolated family members because they did not know what to say or how to relate to me. Being frustrated and unable to adequately communicate my thoughts, ideas, feelings and opinions, I started college. I took courses that would help me to open up, to share my emotions and to express my feelings without being sarcastic. These courses helped me become aware of avenues where I could feel comfortable with people and they, in turn, could be comfortable around me.

Learning how to take a deeper look at self and learning how to accept myself helped me to begin to establish trust with my family and others. I could go to anyone, one-on-one and express my concerns and vice versa.

Recognition of Opposition or Sabotage

Being naive, I was of the opinion that people of the church would not sabotage a project or program. I believed that everyone would go along with the program for the good of the church and the ministry that the church would be offering to the community. How wrong I was. I found out that just because a consensus is made concerning a structural matter, you will find opposition and not

a harmonious working group. People will do quite the contrary. They may agree to disagree but if it leaves a great distaste in their mouths, and the leadership has not communicated well, there will be problems. There will be undercurrents which will cause deception. Therefore, it becomes imperative that the leadership not react and take a pro-active attitude in learning how to deal with sabotage. A pro-active or non-reactive stance implies that you will back off and look at the real issue(s). You feel comfortable about what is taking place and understand the circumstances.

Decision Making

Before I began making my own decisions and accepting responsibility, I allowed others to make them for me. This way if I failed, I could lay the blame on them. However, eventually I realized that I was giving people too much control over my life. So it was incumbent of me to find a means by which I could learn to appreciate Macie and begin to voice my true feelings, ideas, and opinions. It did not feel good to me anymore always stating great philosophers' thoughts and ideas. I wanted to know what I felt and thought. It was time to think for myself, by reading, reflecting, and sharing my opinions with others. Testing them out was exciting. It taught me valued lessons on how to be humble. I began to realized that not everyone will agree with you. I must be prepared to back up my concepts and recognize when to back off, not force the issue and know when, where, and with whom to dialogue.

Celebration

Working with dying patients and their families in the pastoral care and hospice setting, I learned the value of living a quality life. You learn to appreciate your own achievements and to involve others in your life to help you celebrate.

Celebration can occur for any small achievement or honor. The real key to celebration is learning to involve others. It does not mean always partying, but a sharing of ideas, laughing, joking, cards, notes, telephone calls. It could be a worship experience or fellowshiping. In other words, laughing together and getting together about some event, no matter how small, and enjoying each other in conversation or setting where you can appreciate one another.

Celebration keeps the morale level high. It gives persons encouragement and boosts their self-esteem, which helps them to affirm or reaffirm their commitment to whatever cause you may be promoting. When people see that we appreciate them for who they are, they are more apt to give and share their time in various ways and actions.

The Journey Unfolds: The Context

On June 7, 1980, exactly one day after the close of the 1979-80 school year, my two children and I boarded a plane at O'Hare International Airport, in Chicago, Illinois, headed for our residence in Cedartown, Georgia, located approximately one hour and forty-five minutes west of Atlanta, Georgia (approximately 75 miles). This was a new experience for my children and me; our first time being away from my

parents for any period of time. It was my first time leaving the state of Illinois, permanently, to settle in another state without my family or friends. All of my life I have been close to my mom and dad (like the little duck family). When you saw Saul and Elaine Beck, close behind were Macie and sons.

This was a period in my life when I was beginning to learn how to spread my wings apart from my parents. It was a time in my life where I was learning to make my own decisions, mistakes and learning as to how to turn unfortunate circumstances and challenges into positive learning experiences. It was a time when I was seeking to know God better and trying to understand the interruptions and the calls the Sovereign Lord places upon our lives.

My father once said to me when I was preparing to move to Georgia, "I guess MACIE Jewel, a rolling stone will not gather any moss." This implied his ambivalence toward change. To him I was still his little MACIE Jewel when in reality his little girl had grown up and was making things happen in her life.

The same happens in the life of the church. Nothing ever remains the same. People change, attitudes and hearts change, the way we go about business changes (automation vs. manual), the way in which we communicate and fellowship with one another changes, and last but not least the way in which we worship God and transcend it to the community also changes.

If we are to become true followers of Christ, moves, transitions and challenges are going to be eminent. Therefore, it behooves us to listen actively listen

to what God through Jesus Christ is trying to tell us. So, in essence what I am trying to say is that mission and ministry is a vital part of every local congregation. It is imperative to understand that in order to do effective ministry, one must have a clear understanding of his or her goals, objectives, and desired results.

This particular section will give a contextual understanding of Union Chapel United Methodist Church, including a brief summary of its history, sociological composition, and their religious ethos in relation to their environment.

Union Chapel is located in the city of Marietta, Georgia, which is located eight miles northwest of Atlanta, Georgia, in Cobb County. Cobb County is one of the fastest growing counties in the nation, demonstrating a 50.4% increase from 1980 to 1990. By contrast, the U.S. population grew only 18.6%.⁶

Cobb County is considered as part of Atlanta's nine-county metropolitan region. Its population growth is also considered a part of the population growth of the Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). In 1960, Cobb County's share was 9.1% of the Atlanta MSA, growing 15.8% in 1990.⁷ This statistic is indicative of the marked growth of the county and its importance as a component of the Atlanta metropolitan region.

⁶*Cobb County Data Report*, 1992, 6.

⁷*Ibid.*

The percentage of the minority population in Cobb County is 12.5% with the highest concentration of minorities in the South Cobb area, which is 28.1%.⁸ This can be attributed to the large number of apartment complexes in the area. However, this data does not take into consideration the larger number of minorities who are currently being relocated to Cobb's housing projects in the Central Cobb area due to the preparations for the upcoming Olympic games to be held in Atlanta this summer.

The city of Marietta is located in Cobb County's core area, Central Cobb, which is inclusive of the following cities, Marietta, Smyrna, and Dobbins Air Force Base. Marietta is the largest municipality in Cobb County, with a population of 46,197,⁹ approximately 9.5% of Cobb county's population.¹⁰ Seventy-eight per cent of Cobb County's population lives in unincorporated areas.¹¹

Union Chapel United Methodist Church

Union Chapel United Methodist Church is the only African-American United Methodist Church in Marietta and one of two in all of Cobb County. Smith Chapel

⁸Ibid., 7.

⁹*The City of Marietta 1993 Data Book and City Information Guide*, 1993, 3.

¹⁰*Cobb County Data Report*, 1992, 11.

¹¹Ibid.

is the other Methodist Church located in Austell, Georgia. Union Chapel's beginnings were a series of prayer meetings in a little red cabin on Johnson Street. It was founded by Rev. White, Brother James Bowen, Brother Nathan Jackson, and Sister Maria Braxton.

With the first one hundred dollars having been donated by a dental technician, around 1890, the construction of Union Chapel began. The first building was erected on Page Street by Brother John Braxton, under the leadership of Rev. Winn.

In celebration of the South being reunited to the union after the Civil War, Mrs. Maria Braxton thought it would be befitting to name the church Union Chapel in honor of that celebration. Church school (Sunday school), regular worship, and Mission school were offered every Sunday. Volunteers from the Episcopal Church of Marietta helped conduct and lead groups for the children and youth of the community on Sunday afternoons. It was truly a place where the children learned about Jesus and his love for all humanity.

Due to urban renewal and the city's efforts to beautify the communities, many old homes, buildings, and churches were torn down. On September 4, 1971, Union Chapel was one of those buildings that would be torn down. However, the congregation did not give up. Instead they remained intact and united. With hopes of a new church, the congregation assembled in various places to worship God.

After two years of prayer, hoping, and believing that God would deliver, in January, 1973, Brother T.R. Wilson was assigned as pastor of Union Chapel. Hopes of a new facility really began to rise. People began to come up with programs and activities that would help raise needed funds to build a new worship center. The then district superintendent and other conference work area chairpersons made certain that funds were made available to complete the building project.

The new church building was completed on November 14, 1974 at a cost of \$47,000.00. The dedication and cornerstone service took place on November 17, 1974.

The church is located in a transitional area just off a major thoroughfare, North Marietta Parkway, I-75 exit #113 (120 loop). This transition was brought about due to white flight--white single family homeowners moving to the suburbs in order to avoid the encroachment of multiple family low-income dwellings.

Lyman housing projects is the most recent addition to the Marietta Community, just one block from Union Chapel. The complex consists of 127 units, which were refurbished and re-opened in June of 1992. The congregation refers to it as "Canaan Land," due to its rich potential for outreach ministry.

Since Union Chapel is considered a small membership church, and because of its salary range, the members feel as though it is a training ground for new pastors, which means that there has been a rapid turnover of pastors--part-time, student/probationary (1st/2nd year ordinands). As with most churches that have experienced a rapid turnover of pastors, Union Chapel has suffered from a feeling

of low self-esteem. However, there seems to be a new spirit of self-determination of stating how they feel and communicating those feelings to the "powers that be." In other words, the members have decided that they will take a pro-active role in deciding what type of leader will be acceptable.

The pastor that served Union Chapel prior to my appointment was considered by some of the members as being a very knowledgeable individual but a bit immature, where others found him quite abrasive. They exhibited ambivalent feelings toward the pastor due to his various acts of immaturity and/or lack of supervisory skills.

This is a small congregation made up of both old and new members, who are involved in an outreach ministry to the Lyman Housing project. Some of the residents have been given clothing, gathered by the United Methodist Women, to wear when going for job interviews. The elderly and handicapped have been given needed transportation.

As with most small congregations in transient communities, there are numerous obstacles that stand in the way of success or progress: drugs, teenage pregnancy, violent crime, domestic and child abuse, inadequate housing, deficient social services, lack of self-esteem and apathetic government, just to name a few.

Union Chapel has a solid core of people who are committed to the stated Vision of the church which reads:

Union Chapel is a center of refuge for spiritual renewal where the unadulterated Word of God is taught and applied to daily living to: transform lives and

challenge systems and structures that seek to oppress and deny human hope, empower people by demonstrating God's love, and inspire human hope and renewed strength through the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim now as the acceptable year of the Lord.

They especially appreciate the part about being a "center of refuge." There is also a core of people who would prefer simply to be a place for nurture, to take care of one another and to be safe from the violence which is rampant in their world.

Union Chapel currently owns a small church and a parsonage which sits on 2.3 acres of land. Due to the population growth of the congregation, the parsonage is being utilized for meetings and fellowship hours. The current membership is approximately 67, not including preparatory members (children and youth).

The membership continued, under various pastoral leadership, to develop various missional outreach programs to empower the community, to enrich the lives of members, and to help the congregation become aware of what practical application of the gospel entails.

The congregation moved from being a part-time appointment to a full-station church (ability to pay salary, pension, health insurance, continuing education and social security benefits), in 1985 under the leadership of Jacqueline Rose Smothers. The leaders of the church met and discussed the possibility of becoming full-time. In this dialogue members and leaders mapped out strategies to involve the total body in the process. Once the total membership was informed of the desire to become a full-station church a vote was taken. But not before being given a detailed

outline of what expenses they would be responsible, i.e., salary, pension, health insurance, and continuing education. This was to make certain that they could fund the program without any assistance from the general church. More than 51% of the congregation voted to accept the challenge of a full-time congregation. (This was made official in a called charge conference.)

The called charge conference is held in order to place the issue on the table, to involve the District Superintendent, and to allow members to vote their pleasure. Once approved by the church, the next step is the approval of the District Superintendent when equitable salary is involved. The District Superintendent must submit the request for temporary financial support to the Annual Conference Area on Equitable Salary. If the funds are available, a contractual agreement is set up with a phase-out period of three to five years, depending upon the individual circumstances of each congregation. After this, the congregation would have full responsibility for maintaining all aspects and matters that relate to the total ministerial package.

The church has gone through many struggles (miscommunication, no communication, hostility toward one another, misconception as to what is going on in the life of the church, "they" vs. "us", unforgiveness and judgmental attitudes), but they believe that these tests of faith have made them strong. This showed them that no matter what befalls them, God will surely make a way out of no way. Yet, the followers of Christ, as of this writing, are facing another challenge--purchasing or

building a new facility in order to provide programming that will meet the growing needs of the changing society. It is the prayer of Union Chapel that the Lord will continue to lead and guide them so that the ministries and programs provided will at least begin to satisfy the thirst and hunger that linger in the hearts of God's children.

On November 7, 1994, the church developed a vision statement to begin to formulate ministries that complement the vision statement. Detailed plans for ministry will be developed for the 1995-96 conference year. A resolution presented at the November 1994 Charge Conference began the process to sell and purchase new properties for Union Chapel to do effective ministry. The resolution had to be revised in order to meet conference requirements. In order to sell property, there needs to be a 2/3 majority vote of the congregation, and to purchase property, there must be a majority plus one. Completed plans must be presented to the District Committee on Church Relocation for approval. The Conference Committee on Congregational Development must certify that this sale is appropriate, that proposed property is adequate, and that financial agreements meet guidelines outlined in the *Book of Discipline*. Once the District Committee makes their decision, it is, in turn, referred to the Conference Committee on Congregational Development for approval. A motion was made that Metro Realty be given authority to pursue sale and purchase of property for Union Chapel. The "For Sale" sign was placed on

the property informing the community of our intention to sell the parsonage and church.

Therefore, it is imperative that we, as the church of God, begin to be the true church, as we look at various alternatives and resources that can be used in order to bring people to Christ. Children of God must put aside their own selfish needs to communicate and fellowship with one another. They must get involved with the overall ministries of the church, being witnesses in a society where people no longer believe in God or fail to adhere to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The members are trying to focus and are beginning to break down their vision statement and see what vital ministries and programs they can provide in the year ahead. Plans call for beginning one ministry and building upon it from year to year.

We are now trying to learn how to talk with and talk to one another. We are not looking for what or who is wrong, but what is right, as it relates to the teachings and examples of Jesus.

My ultimate goal is to help the congregation reaffirm the beauty that they have within themselves and to help them to learn how to take the time to smell the flowers while "the blood is running warm in their veins," to offer them hope, to reassure them that their dreams do not have to be lost and that they can still dream no matter what circumstances have befallen them.

CHAPTER III

THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

In a world full of chaos, tension, frustration, resistance, and the need to run, the church is being called on to take a stand in leading souls to Christ. They (the church) are being asked to show their true faith and trust in God. Contemporary theology describes the church as people who are actively living out their commitments as they care for each other. Images of the church found in contemporary writings confirm the active character of God's people as reconciling agents, community of faith, community of moral discourse, people of God, covenanting people, and servant people. These active images imply a style of leadership that will seek to guide, inform, and assist a membership in assessing the coherence between the images and the life of the people.¹ Therefore, effective leadership principles (communication, recognition of opposition, decision making, and celebration) help to inform and empower the laity's thinking and allows the faith community to reflect upon the character and quality of life.

¹Robert H. Craig, *Dry Bones Live: Helping Congregations Discover New Life* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 2.

Challenges, changes, and transitions happen in all of our lives, but there are means by which we are able to handle our fears of these unwanted circumstances that come our way. Christians are learning that if faith and trust in God is to be evident in their lives, they must get involved in the ministries of the church. They are to live out their faith and trust in God by doing for others and seeing how freedom, justice, and compassion are actualized in our daily activities with people.

In terms of the covenant formulations of the Old Testament, God first favors his people on his own initiative, then requires that they live in accordance with their status as his people. He then responds with a blessing or curse to their obedient or disobedient living. Human righteous acts do not incur God's favor; they live out God's favor.

In the Old Testament book of Ezekiel, chapter 37, the reader views a valley of dry and separated bones that begin to breathe and rise to their feet. The spirit of the Lord tells the prophet--and the contemporary interpreter--that the bones are the whole house of Israel, which is in exile in Babylon. Many asked if the bones could live. The oracle promises resurrection to the community. The power of God is known in human history. This passage from the Old Testament, in which dry bones come to life, opens people's eyes to the Spirit of God empowering the ordinary. The Spirit provides new life or revitalization. That which is old can become new again through the breath of Yahweh. Perception of God's vision can bring about vitality

and activity. It is God's doing--then and now--but it also involves the prophet and the multitude.²

The implication is that we, the children of God, have to put some sweat equity in our ministries of the church. We must begin to plan and develop goals and objectives for the ongoing life of the church. The church as a body must come together on one accord and see that neither the pastor nor the leaders of the church can tell the congregation where it needs to go and what it should be about. The congregation must motivate itself and set its own terms as to how it will exist and increase its involvement in the ministry and mission of the church. In other words, the congregation must decide for themselves how they will put their faith in action without trying to manipulate God. In short, according to the new view, both the nature and the purpose of the church are to be sought in love according to Jesus Christ. The purpose of the church is to bear witness to the love of Christ in the world today. Such witness is the opportunity of the people of God. Therefore, the church is the people.

We need to see the church neither as a multitude nor as a corporate unity of totality. We need to see it as a covenanted community of fellow believers whose

²Ibid., 18.

lives consist of communion one with another and with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.³

In John 4:1-42, the parable of the woman at the well, let us see how Jesus employs the principles of leadership to help the young woman, and eventually others, come into an awareness of him and themselves to become faithful and trusting followers.

Communication

Establishing communication for trust and faith to be ensconced, we see the unreckoning generosity with which Christ used his life.⁴ Jesus' itinerary may have been governed by geographical expediency, but his stay in Samaria was governed by the theological necessity of offering himself to those whom social convention deemed unacceptable,⁵ which brought Jesus to the place where the Samaritan woman lived, reaching Jacob's well, being wearied because of the long noontide journey. He sat by the well while His disciples went into the city to buy food. The

³Joseph Haroutunian, *God With Us: A Theology of Transpersonal Life* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), 51-52.

⁴George Arthur Buttrick, ed. *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. VIII, "John" (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1952), 531.

⁵Leander E. Keck, ed. *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, vol. IX, "Luke/John" (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 565.

reality of our Lord's fatigue testifies to the reality of His humanity.⁶ Roger L. Fredrikson in his book, *Mastering The New Testament John*, states that "Jesus has joined us in the frailty of our flesh. Otherwise, salvation is unreal."

John does not show us a figure freed from the tiredness and the struggle of our humanity. He shows us one from whom life was an effort as it is for us; he shows us one who also was tired and had to go on.⁷

In the highly symbolic fourth Gospel, both Jesus and the woman emerge as more than usual; Jesus tired enough to rest at a well, thirsty enough to share a Samaritan's drinking cup. The woman is skeptical, intelligent, irrepressible. Though alienated from Jesus by race, gender, and life style, she cannot easily be pressed into service or conformity.⁸ In John 4:4-42, the Messiah comes not only to Israel, but also to those whom Israel marginalizes and despises. Unlike the Old Testament well scenes, Jesus does not come to the well looking for a woman to be his bride, but for a witness who will recognize the Messiah and bring the despised people to him (vv.34-38).⁹

⁶Herbert Lockyer, *All the Women of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 236.

⁷William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), 148-49.

⁸Rose Sallberg Kam, *Their Stories, Our Stories: Women of the Bible* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 215.

⁹Keck, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, 565.

In quietly asking her for help, Jesus had cut through centuries of suspicion and animosity. This breakthrough had not been the outcome of a conference on "cross-cultural evangelism," which had developed a theology for "reaching the Samaritans." No, there had been simply the honest expression of a basic human need. And at a deeper level, there had been the loving concern of one reaching out to touch that other solitary, needy person.¹⁰

All throughout this first scene we see Jesus staying connected with nonverbal forms of communication, with vivid illustrations of how his life parallels our lives. He is not pretentious, but allows Himself to be servant so that He may win souls and allow people to reconcile themselves to Him.

Decision Making

Jesus made frequent decisions that went contrary to the thinking of the political leaders of his time; decisions that were unfavorable and defied the laws of tradition, which often times got him in trouble. As we see in this story, he challenges the natural order by doing just the opposite of what is expected of him. In a time when it was disadvantageous for him to socialize with sinners, speak to women in public, heal the sick, give sight to the blind, and forgiving people of their sins, he makes a concerted effort to meet the unlikely where they are.

¹⁰Roger L. Fredrikson, *Mastering the New Testament John* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1985), 96.

In many stories where Jesus associated with women, he chose to disregard the tradition as it was observed in the cleanliness laws.¹¹ Jesus did away with nationalism and regionalism as he spoke to the woman about a universal context that went beyond the parochial vision of Jerusalem and Mt. Zion or Samaria and Mt. Gerizim. Jesus' radical and new image envisioned true worshipers everywhere worshipping God together in spirit and truth. Salvation would be for all who believed and who received God's gift of living water.¹² Instead, he deliberately chose in favor of a relationship with the individual.¹³ It was not a bucket that Jesus needed for his living water. He needed a person. Someone who was willing to receive what he could give. Someone with a right spirit who would hear and believe what he said was truth.¹⁴

The woman can only respond with undisguised amazement.¹⁵ As she drew water from the well, she asked Him, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, asketh drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?" Jesus has disarmed her. She does not

¹¹Helen Bruch Pearson, *Do What You Have the Power to Do: Studies of Six New Testament Women* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1992), 145.

¹²*Ibid.*, 147.

¹³*Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁵Fredrikson, *Mastering the New Testament John*, 97.

throw up a wall of defensiveness, but rather invites some kind of explanation. With the phrase, "For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans," John seeks to help this reader understand what a wide, deep chasm Jesus has come to bridge, "not only with a sinful daughter of men, but between the Son of God and the whole people of Samaria."¹⁶ Yet, there was a deeper well of spiritual truth so necessary for man's hidden needs, of which she was unconscious. She was a traveler in the journey of life, travel-stained by her sins, but had not discovered as yet the fountain opened for uncleanness.¹⁷

When Jesus made a decision to engage a person or persons in dialogue, he knew what he was doing and why he was doing it. He had a specific cause or purpose in mind. He knew what he believed and what his function on earth was, and stated them, allowing his disciples, followers and others to make up their minds, ask their questions and formulate their conclusions without his influence.

As we continue to peruse this portion of scripture, we see Jesus allowing the woman of Samaria to continue to formulate and ask her questions, so she will be able to determine how she will respond to this stranger who is asking her for a drink. So a dialogue is opened in which Jesus invites her to answer her question herself ("If you knew...").¹⁸ If the woman could recognize the identity of the person

¹⁶Ibid., 97.

¹⁷Lockyer, *All the Women of the Bible*, 237.

¹⁸Keck, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, 566.

with whom she speaks there comes an amazing reversal of roles. It is not long before the one who has been asked for water is addressing the thirsty traveler as "Sir," and asking Him for the water He offers. The One who asks for water is Himself the Giver of everlasting water of life. And the one who is asked is in desperate need of the water that the stranger alone can give. How strange and beautiful that the Giver of living water has come in weakness to share God's gift.¹⁹

What Jesus supplied was not external water to satisfy the recurring physical need, but an internal and eternal source of unfailing spiritual, life-giving water. Such living water was a divine gift (Isaiah 55:1), was Christ Himself (4:10), easily reached. The woman walked far to reach Jacob's well, but the spiritual well is ever at hand and a satisfying, unfailing gift for "whosoever drinketh" (Revelation 22:17). As light broke in upon her darkened mind, she answered His comment in a tone of respect. There was something about His voice and manner that gripped her heart, and while she did not understand His message, she was conscious of its latent force, and felt that this traveler was no ordinary man. He seemed to speak with authority, and so passes in her address to Him from, "Thou, being a Jew" (the last word uttered in the tone of contempt) to the reverential, "Sir."²⁰

But the gift cannot be received without the Giver. "If you knew that gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked Him"

¹⁹Fredrikson, *Mastering the New Testament John*, 97.

²⁰Lockyer, *All the Women of the Bible*, 238.

(v.10). Jesus seeks to penetrate the woman's spiritual darkness. Unless she comes to know and accept the One who speaks to her, His gift can never be hers. For the Father shares this living water through the Son. It springs forth from an unfailing Source and is not water that seeps into the earthen well, dug by human hands, even Jacob's.²¹

Jesus remains focused on the real issue and does not allow the woman to trap him into irrelevant issues or matters as seen in verse 12. But he engages the woman into a deeper and more significant level of conversation and awareness because Jesus does not argue about the place of Jacob in Samaritan history. But He makes it clear that water from this well can satisfy thirst only for a brief time.²² God's age of grace has come. The One at the well offers "water from above" that can quench this woman's deepest thirst, not for a day, but forever!²³ So the teaching of Jesus, His words of Wisdom and truth, is life, water for man dying of thirst. There is no inner newness without receiving God's wondrous gift, the Holy Spirit, promised and offered by the Son.²⁴

²¹Fredrikson, *Mastering the New Testament John*, 97.

²²*Ibid.*, 98.

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴*Ibid.*

Not about to give up on her, Jesus used the same move he often made when debating with the scribes and Pharisees. Completely ignoring the immediate past conversation and questions, he approached the discussion from an entirely new direction.²⁵ The woman's openness to Jesus and her willingness to engage him in conversation stand in marked contrast to Nicodemus, who only greeted Jesus with amazement and resistance (3:4, 9). The Samaritan woman recognizes neither Jesus' true identity nor the fullness of his gifts, but in v.15, she is willing to receive what she thinks he is offering and hence to acknowledge her need of him.²⁶ The conversation provides another example of Jesus' ability to see and know all things (cf. 1:48-50; 2:24). The woman's response to Jesus' request seems straightforward enough (v. 17a), but this reply (vv.17b-18) causes the reader to reassess the woman's words. The reader accepts the woman's words at face value, but Jesus penetrated beyond the surface level of her words to arrive at the truth about her life. It is not until Jesus indicated why the woman's words are true that the reader, too, know the truth.²⁷

The Sin Issue: "Go call your husband" (vv.16-19). An opening has come. Everything that has taken place between Jesus and this woman has been a prepara-

²⁵Pearson, *Do What You Have the Power to Do*, 151.

²⁶Keck, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, 567.

²⁷*Ibid.*

tion for this delicate moment. Now with an incisive, deft stroke of His spiritual scalpel, Jesus lays bare the woman's deepest self. With one simple sentence, "Go call your husband," the One who is Light has exposed her evil deeds, the disorder of her domestic life. If she cannot face herself and admit that her tangled, sick relationships are sin, she can never drink of living water. The gift is free, but it cannot be received without repentance.²⁸

The conversation in vv.16-19 is also a moment of revelation for the woman. Jesus' insight into her words and life leads her to declare him to be a prophet (v.19). Her response recalls the response of Nathanael in 1:47-49. With both Nathanael and the Samaritan woman, a demonstration of perception and insight on Jesus' part leads to a christological confession.²⁹ The woman waited for the familiar rebuke about her relationship with the man that she heard from all the townspeople, but there was no rebuke or scorn or ridicule. Jesus simply told her the situation like it was. How Jesus knew about her marital history is not revealed. But the woman perceived that Jesus possessed supernatural abilities when he said, "You have had five husbands, and the one you are now living with is not your husband."³⁰ Jesus

²⁸Fredrikson, *Mastering the New Testament John*, 99.

²⁹Keck, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, 567.

³⁰Pearson, *Do What You Have the Power to Do*, 151.

commends her for telling the truth. And then he opens up her whole confused situation.³¹

Jesus did not dwell on her past. He did no more than mention it. And once it was brought out into the open, it no longer held a paralyzing spell on the woman. As her past was redeemed, so was her heart. This was the beginning of her conversion--when repentance and forgiveness were made possible. The woman turned from being a victim and hostage of guilt toward a new life of freedom and victory. Baptized with the gift of God's spiritual living water, she felt vulnerable and exposed in a way for which she had no language to describe. Jesus told her what he knew in a way that honored her. She was more than an occasion for a drink of water. He took her seriously enough to teach her and to invite a response. He was confident that she could understand and follow his theological perspectives about God and worship and spirit and truth. What she said mattered to him. He believed in her and invested himself in their relationship. And this made all the difference in how she heard and received his words. It was an attitude of spirit and truth that she went on with the conversation. The woman felt secure enough in Jesus' presence to confess that she believed in the messiah! And when he came, she

³¹Fredrikson, *Mastering the New Testament John*, 99.

confided to Jesus, the messiah would teach them all things. He would make everything clear.³²

When one reads the story on its own terms, one sees that the conversation about the woman's husband serves two purposes. First, it illustrates Jesus' ability to see and know all things. Second, it is a moment of revelation for the woman, a moment when she is able to see Jesus with new eyes. The exchange between Jesus and the Samaritan woman about her husbands, thus, does not de-legitimize the woman because of her supposed immorality but instead shows the woman's growing faith.³³ In spite of all the negatives of her situation, he saw in her exactly the person needed to bring the kingdom to Sychar.³⁴ Jesus was more interested in honesty than perfection. The man sitting on the well saw in this Samaritan woman gifts and potential that she had never dared to explore. His heart ached for her and he longed for what she could still become. But first, he had to reach beyond her doubts and defenses; beyond her bruised and battered self-esteem. Before she could move past where she was, she had to desire the gift of "living water." She had to

³²Ibid., 152-53.

³³Carol A. Newson and Sharon H. Ringe, *The Women's Bible Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 296.

³⁴Kam, *Their Stories, Our Stories*, 217.

recognize and confess her need. Jesus made another attempt to explain about the water he offered--water, that, when consumed, would quench thirst forever and spring forth into eternal life.³⁵

Celebration

When we make decisions based on the character of God, we can celebrate in various ways at every level of our decision making. The Samaritan woman was so excited about her recognition of and experience with Jesus as the Messiah that she invited others to celebrate with her. Her encounter with Jesus had changed her life and her decision making. Jesus celebrates with us when we trust him and allow his love to change us and our decisions for the advancement of his rule. Jesus gives us new purpose, new attitudes and new behavior. Like the Samaritan woman, we become new creatures and we make great decisions, which creates an atmosphere of sharing and trust at different times in our accomplishments and positive feelings. As we rejoice, people of God observe and experience constructive changes in us, which leads them to make faith commitments of their own. Therefore, all can celebrate the continuing changes and accomplishments in the name of our God. With Jesus, we can celebrate His life-giving water that continues to overflow in us.

³⁵Pearson, *Do What You Have the Power to Do*, 151.

Jesus' words in v. 21 also remind the woman of the object of worship: "the Father." The Samaritan and Jewish conflict so dominates the woman's perspective that her words to Jesus (v.20) contain no reference to who is being worshiped.³⁶

There is a divine dialectic in worship. The spirit and the truth are always interacting, the one leading to the other, then back again. The Spirit brings us into truth, and the truth draws us into the Spirit. In Jesus, we live in Spirit and truth, and He brings us to the Father whom we worship and adore.³⁷ "God is spirit" (v. 24), not bound to any place or people, and those who worship God share in the spirit. Jesus' presence in the world initiated this transformation of worship, because Jesus' presence changes the moment of anticipation ("the hour is coming") into the moment of in breaking ("and is now here").³⁸

The hour that is coming signals crisis and decision, a time of judgement and opportunity. According to her tradition, she knows the Messiah is coming, a teacher and lawgiver in the tradition of Moses. He will announce God's final and absolute truth.³⁹

³⁶Keck, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, 567.

³⁷Fredrikson, *Mastering the New Testament John*, 101.

³⁸Keck, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, 568.

³⁹Fredrikson, *Mastering the New Testament John*, 101.

His eyes twinkled and danced as he leaned toward her and whispered the revelation, "I am he! I am he--the one who is speaking to you."⁴⁰ There it was--out in the open. It was not to his closest disciples that Jesus revealed his Messiahship. The receiver of his revelation was a nameless woman of Samaria who had been married five times and now lived with a sixth man who was her lover! She recognized him, and in the knowing, Jesus' challenge and promise to her had been realized. Jesus had said that if she knew who he was, she would ask for living water, and it would be given to her. Now she knew what it meant!⁴¹

It is significant that Jesus' first declaration of Himself as the Messiah was to this Samaritan woman (4:26). She had been honest with Him, and whenever we come in honest faith to God, that faith is confirmed in His gracious acceptance. Her life was transformed, for she left her burden of sin for a new moral start. She left her religion based on a place, for faith in a person, and she left her bitter spirit for a new freedom and joy.⁴²

The woman shows deepening respect, addressing the Stranger, "Sir," again, convinced now that He must be some kind of prophet. It is the least she can say.

⁴⁰Pearson, *Do What You Have the Power to Do*, 153.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Myron Augsburger, *Discovering John* (New York: Guideposts, 1986), 36.

After all, a prophet is one who has the gift of discernment and boldly speaks God's truth about a given situation. Surely this man knows her condition.⁴³

This change of heart was what Jesus had hoped would happen. Could she be the one for whom he felt God had directed him to come to Samaria? To talk about water at a deeper level than physical thirst was an opportunity Jesus could not resist. Jesus gave the woman a double challenge that ended with a promise. If she would recognize who he was, she would ask to be given living water, and then it would be given to her as a gift of God.⁴⁴

Hence, the New Testament takes pains to bring home to us Christ's oneness with us; and people recognizing that will listen to him, feeling that he has the right to speak. Thus those who labor and are heavy laden can see for themselves that he is carrying burdens far heavier than their own, and might well be able to show them how to bear theirs with something of his own unfaltering courage and quietheartedness. Since he himself has been tempted in all points like we are, but with evil flinging itself against him with a ferocity of fury which we who go down so cheaply before its lesser efforts have ever experienced, it is likely that he can

⁴³Fredrikson, *Mastering the New Testament John*, 99-100.

⁴⁴Pearson, *Do What You Have the Power to Do*, 150.

show us how to stand fast where he himself has stood. And seeing that it is a voice rising out of a bleak and wintry-looking life that assures us that God is love, it does not irritate us, it convinces us.⁴⁵

It was Christ who took the first step, and opened this famous incident. He did it by throwing himself upon her courtesy, and asking something from her, Give me a drink.⁴⁶

There is no shadow of doubt that what draws most people to him is not so much what he gives as that he asks. Many have no great appetite for the spiritual, for the deep things of God he offers us. But it does move them that he looks to them to help him, and throws himself frankly on their assistance, offering them a share in his tremendous enterprise. And not a few do hear the call, do thrill to it, and to the measure of their ability do respond.⁴⁷ Even when we are apathetic and half-hearted, only partially attentive, duly putting through a formal weekly routine, or very little more, God, with huge liberality in his heart and vast gifts in his hands, is searching for those who will accept them, and allow him to save them, help them, hearten them.⁴⁸

⁴⁵Keck, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, 521.

⁴⁶Ibid., 522.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., 527.

All of history is full of instances of how Christ often feels that he can trust himself much farther to some most unlikely-looking people than he can to the masses of us. The Samaritan woman was the most unlikely person to bring any authentic tiding about the matters of which she was talking, but she impressed them enough to make them stream out through the glare to see for themselves if there was anything in it (cf. vs.39).⁴⁹

The woman left her water jar, and as she turned toward the city, she turned away from her old life. She had a story to tell, a message to give, and an invitation to issue. Now that she had tasted living water and her spiritual thirst had been quenched, she must proclaim its goodness to others.⁵⁰ Her witness is three-fold. First, she invites her fellow townspeople to "come and see." This invitation is crucial in the Fourth Gospel (cf. 1:37-39, 46). It is an invitation to participate in the life of faith, to experience Jesus for oneself. Second, the woman offers her own experience as the basis of her witness, which here may build on the Samaritan expectation of a teaching Messiah (cf. v. 25). Third, she broaches the question of whether Jesus might be the Messiah.⁵¹

⁴⁹Ibid., 295.

⁵⁰Pearson, *Do What You Have the Power to Do*, 153.

⁵¹Keck, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, 569.

The townspeople gathered around the woman whom they talked about when they went to draw water--the one with the questionable reputation. She seemed even more a stranger to them now as she hurried toward them. There was something about her that was different. She had changed. She was radiant, enthusiastic, convincing. She spoke with authority. Whatever had happened to her was powerful. They wanted to know about it.⁵²

After their own personal experience of hearing Jesus, the townspeople said to the woman, "We believe, not just because of your word, but because we have heard for ourselves. This is truly the Savior of the world!" The woman had sowed the seed of salvation and nourished them with living water. Her life was changed, and so were the lives of many of the townspeople, who then changed the life of the city in which they lived. It was at Jacob's well that the vocation of witnessing was firmly established by a Samaritan woman who did what she had the power to do.⁵³

The testimony of this woman, empowered by the witness of Jesus, bore much fruit for eternal life. Through Jesus, the Messiah, and the woman, a hauler of living water, all barriers of tradition, race, nationality, gender, and prejudice had been transcended. The invitation, once given to a small city in Samaria, now became an invitation to the entire world.⁵⁴

⁵²Pearson, *Do What You Have the Power to Do*, 154.

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

The woman's witness brings the townspeople to Jesus (v.30). Their movement toward Him provides the backdrop for Jesus' conversation with his disciples. He offers a new way of thinking to his conversation partners. Twice in v. 35b, Jesus exhorts his disciples to look around them: "open your eyes and look at the fields." Jesus asks his disciples to attend carefully to the situation in which they find themselves, to read the data of their own experience instead of trusting in conventional wisdom (cf. 9:28-33, where the blind man's trust in his own experience is superior to conventional teachings). In their immediate context, Jesus' words draw the disciples' attention to the Samaritans who are coming to him (v.30). The "crop" of Samaritan believers is proof that the harvest is ready.⁵⁵

Worship

Jesus invites us to be faithful, as he was to the true worship of God. In the church, our decision making process becomes difficult because we do not view the process as a part of our understanding of worship. Often we spend too much time arguing about minor details, rather than focusing on the major issues.

The Samaritan woman presented Jesus with the matter of location of worship. Jesus directed the conversation to a major point--the attitude of the worshipers. It is not where we worship that counts, but how we worship. Jesus

⁵⁵Keck, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, 570.

invites us to be genuine in our worship. Whether we are clergy or laity, inside or outside the institution of the church, Jesus teaches us to proclaim God, not ourselves or our decisions as the object of our worship. Jesus understood by his decision to even talk with this woman that he would be honoring the spirit and truth of God.

Like Jesus preached and lived, the decisions we make should be a form of worship that reflects and is shaped by the character of God. God is spirit and is present everywhere. God can be worshiped always, including in our decision-making times in the life of the church. Jesus rejoices when we become aware of our need to worship God in spirit and in truth, which leads to transformation in our worship and transformation in our decisions. It is a model of growing faith.

The central fact in a time of worship is not that we are seeking God, but that he is seeking us. Often he contrives to find means of breaking in to us. "Ready was I to answer men who never asked me, ready to be found by men who never sought me. I cried out, 'Here am I,' to folk who never called to me...Ere ever they call to me, I answer, and while they speak I hear" (Isa 65:1, 24 Moffatt).⁵⁶

God was not seeking those who were caught up in the dispute of where to worship God. God was seeking those who would worship in spirit and truth. Just as living water could not be contained nor the spirit of revelation bound, neither could God's spirit of truth be controlled. No religious system or body of believers, even the chosen people, could bestow or withhold God's presence from others.⁵⁷

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid., 147.

But when God's willingness to give is met by responsive and receptive hearts; when what the liturgical experts call the descending type of service in which God comes to our aid with all the grace that we can need, intermingles with the ascending type, in which man climbs and reaches out toward God in adoration and thanksgiving, in confession and intercession and petition, with eager hearts that long for him and watch for him--things happen.⁵⁸

When Jesus reached across the invisible boundary dividing men and women and Jews and Samaritans, he set the woman free to reach across the invisible boundary dividing herself from the people of her town. When the woman understood Jesus to be the Messiah, she discovered living water not just for herself, but for her whole community.⁵⁹ She was a vehicle of God's salvation to those outside the chosen people. Through her seeking, believing, and witnessing, Jesus entered into Samaritan history, and many came to believe that he was indeed the Savior of the world.⁶⁰ In the glow of her newborn faith, the woman had to tell others and share with them all she had heard and experienced.

⁵⁸Ibid., 527.

⁵⁹April Yamasaki, *Remember Lot's Wife and Other Unnamed Women of the Bible* (Elgin, IL: Faithquest, 1991), 97.

⁶⁰Pearson, *Do What You Have the Power to Do*, 148.

Like any good evangelist, the woman brought together people who needed Jesus with the living Messiah himself. She did not simply move the people to believe in Jesus on the strength of her personal testimony and faith. Instead, she introduced them to the Living one, that they might hear Jesus' word for themselves and so develop a living and personal faith.⁶¹

The woman's role as an evangelist is further highlighted by a number of specific phrases in the text. As Jesus called his disciples, so the woman called her neighbors to "come and see" (1:39; 4:29). As Jesus would later pray for his disciples and those who believed "through their word," so the woman's neighbors believed "because of the woman's testimony" or, more literally, "through the woman's word" (17:20; 4:39). Jesus' own words to his disciples also seemed to imply that the woman was one of the "others" who labored, while the disciples were those who had entered her labor (4:38).⁶²

The Samaritan woman became an earthen vessel for God's use. She was a salvation bringer and an agent of reconciliation. For those who were thirsty for eternal life, she was a hauler of "living water."⁶³ To witness to Jesus--to see Jesus

⁶¹Yamasaki, *Remember Lot's Wife*, 97.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 98.

⁶³Pearson, *Do What You Have the Power to Do*, 148.

and tell others about that experience--is one of the primary marks of discipleship in John. Now the Samaritan woman witnesses to Jesus, and through her words many come to faith. When the Samaritan villagers hear and see Jesus for themselves, the woman's witness is superseded (4:42). That is the appropriate pattern of discipleship and faith. The witness that leads to Jesus is replaced by one's own experience of Jesus.⁶⁴

Recognition of Opposition--Sabotage

The disciples wanted to ask Jesus why he is speaking with her, but their question remains unvoiced. Their protests reflect traditional cultural and social conventions and expectations; however, Jesus will not be limited by such conventions and restraints. He breaks open boundaries in his conversation with the Samaritan woman: the boundary between male and female, the boundary between "chosen people" and "rejected people." Jesus' journey to Samaria and his conversation with the woman demonstrate that the grace of God that he offers is available to all. Jesus and his ministry will not be bound by social conventions. This conversation challenges the status quo by offering the water of life (4:13-14) to a Samaritan woman.⁶⁵

⁶⁴Newson and Ringe, *The Women's Bible Commentary*, 296.

⁶⁵Ibid.

In biblical and modern times as we move toward commitment, there will always be those who attempt to sabotage or oppose our decisions. Our approach to these times can be informed by using Jesus as our example. We know that throughout his ministry, Jesus faced many obstacles but he faced each one in a proactive posture. He did not fear sharing his gifts and call with others. He shared with this woman, despite the violation of societal conventions. He risked crossing boundaries, rather than constructing boundaries. We too must, without great irritation, be willing to face our opposers with bold, inviting confidence. We must be sure of ourselves and the decisions we have made, knowing that every opportunity has been given to others to participate with us in our deliberations. Everyone will not accept, but if the foundation of our decisions is our relationship with God, which includes relating to others, then the presence of saboteurs and opposers can be realistically handled. Jesus allowed the woman to raise doubts about herself and him. Rather than reacting and despising her questioning, he calmly led her into grasping the nature of who he was and what he had to offer her.

Unless the principles of leadership are employed in our dealings with members, major decisions are hard to establish. Therefore in order for a faith community to become faithful, the self-same principles in leadership decision-making skills that Jesus used in the dialogue with the woman of Samaria must also take place on a regular basis in our various congregations. These principles are essential to our growth.

The principles that God uses in order to save us and to lend to our growth is demonstrated with his visit, conversation, the testimony, his sharing and caring with the woman at the well. Therefore, growth means change. There is no growth without change in relationships, functions, and purposes.⁶⁶

The imagery of the writer of Colossians (Col. 2:18-19) suggests that the same change or transforming processes ought to characterize the collective life of Christians. The church grows and changes continuously as it commits itself to become the body of Christ. And the nature and direction of change is qualified, directed, and judged as the body holds "fast to the Head," Jesus Christ, who is from God.⁶⁷

Robert Worley suggests in his book that, "The head of the body remains constant." But the joints and ligaments need to be examined and encouraged to grow. These joints and ligaments in church organizations are the structures, the decision-making, communication, interaction, and the theological contents we provide for one another. Change in them should be made for the purpose of more appropriately expressing Christian faith.⁶⁸

⁶⁶Robert C. Worley, *Change in the Church: A Source of Hope* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), 97.

⁶⁷Ibid., 95.

⁶⁸Ibid., 96-97.

Changing church and secular organizations is a theological activity. We change not for the sake of change, or to be contemporary, or to implement the latest fads, no matter whether they be educational, liturgical, or "mission" expressions. Our only valid basis for changing is to live our lives as the body of Christ.⁶⁹

⁶⁹Ibid., 108.

CHAPTER IV

DESCRIPTION OF THE MODEL FOR MINISTRY

The Context Associates

We all know that effective and productive ministry cannot be done alone or in isolation. It takes all of us--pastor, leaders and members--to work cooperatively to help turn our communities around. Empowering the laity enhances the overall ministry of the church at large and affords the congregation opportunities of learning. This helps us to become better facilitators of change. In this particular project the persons who took on the endeavor with the pastor were the church building and relocation committee who was initially chosen by my predecessor and endorsed by the church through their voting process in charge conference.

The composition of this committee was the finance chair, the trustee chair, the church treasurer (who has expertise in mortgage loans) and the pastor. The persons were young adults who range from 35 to 50 years of age. They were new members of the congregation who had less than seven years in the congregation.

There was not a lot of time to set up another context associate group; however, there was the opportunity to move the leadership of Union Chapel to a higher level of decision making. We introduced and taught new concepts and means of communicating with the members, we reinforced the ideas of staying

connected, establishing trust and having faith in one another. We also attempted to address the need of recognizing that in any major decision there may be some opposition, with persons seeking to sabotage the work of the committee. Communicating our efforts and involving members at every phase of the process of new development helped to curtail some of the problems that we encountered.

Lengthy dialogues took place as we tried to learn the importance of decision making (feeling comfortable with our own feelings, views, and ideas), realizing the need to allow members the freedom to voice their opinions. We were not concerned with who or what is wrong, but what is right and in keeping with the gospel.

We highlighted the fact that celebration and appreciation are always in order when you seek to help members with their faith commitments. Rejoicing always, as Philippians 4:4 states, in the progress and achievements made during the venture. Since people want to feel needed, wanted and appreciated for their efforts, it is vital to all ministries to develop processes that will offer people occasions to celebrate their accomplishments.

Persons have varied educational and professional backgrounds, economic status, cultural awareness and views. Some of the committee members commute to worship service each week because they live in surrounding communities that are in the outlying area of Marietta, Georgia.

Our trustee chair and convener of the committee is a native of South Carolina, an ex-military person, who is currently employed by AT&T

Communications as a business communication technician. He is interested and involved in the educational aspects of the congregation and is involved in outreach ministry to the community. He would like to one day see the church move forward, become energetic and grow spiritually. He and his wife commute every other week to South Carolina to monitor property they own there. It is their intention, however, to one day return home.

The finance chair is a native of South Carolina as well. He is an ex-military employee who took early retirement to be close to his family and involved in the lives and activities of his two small children. He is an educator who is currently employed by the Cobb County Public School System. The finance chair is actively involved in the total ministry of the church. He seeks to take a pro-active approach to religion and would one day hope to see us as a seven-day-a-week church with rich programming and activities taking place. He would love to see the community actively involved in our church.

The church treasurer is a native of Boaz, Alabama. She is currently employed by a prominent real estate agent located in Atlanta. She has expertise in mortgage financing. Our treasurer is actively involved in the music ministry of the church (children, youth and adult).

An older committee member is a native of Marietta, Georgia, whose grandmother was one of the founding mothers of Union Chapel Church. An ex-officio member of the committee, he is a retired nickel engine aircraft mechanic of

24 years from Lockheed Air Force Base in Marietta. He is instrumental in maintaining the financial records of our building fund, and keeps us aware of the plans (architectural) that were initiated prior to the present pastor's assignment to Union Chapel. He is interested in the expansion program of the church and the upkeep of our facilities, especially the grounds.

The chair of our United Methodist Men is our bi-partisan member who, besides the ex-officio member, has some longevity in the congregation and relates well to members who are longstanding. Born in South Carolina and raised in Baltimore, Maryland, he is employed by the Georgia Correctional System as a parole officer. He is interested in the total ministry of the church and freely volunteers his time. Currently, he participates in the worship experience as liturgist and hopes to see Union Chapel grow by leaps and bounds, and makes certain that there is balance in the local church.

Three additional trustees were appointed to serve on the committee; however, only two actively participated in the project. One is a native of Cohutta, Georgia and represents the church on the staff parish relations committee, trustee committee, and finance committee. He is also employed by Lockheed Aeronautics, in Marietta, as a tool planner. He is interested in the educational, missional outreach and building expansion of the local church.

The second trustee to participate in our project is a native of Marietta and has been a member of this local congregation since childhood. She is employed by

AT&T and works as a purchasing agent for the company. Not only is she active on the trustee committee, but she also serves as the chair of the usher board. In addition, she trains our acolytes.

These persons were added to the committee to assure a balance of age representation of the membership. Adding these members of the committee then changed our age range from 35-50 to 30-78.

The Model for Ministry

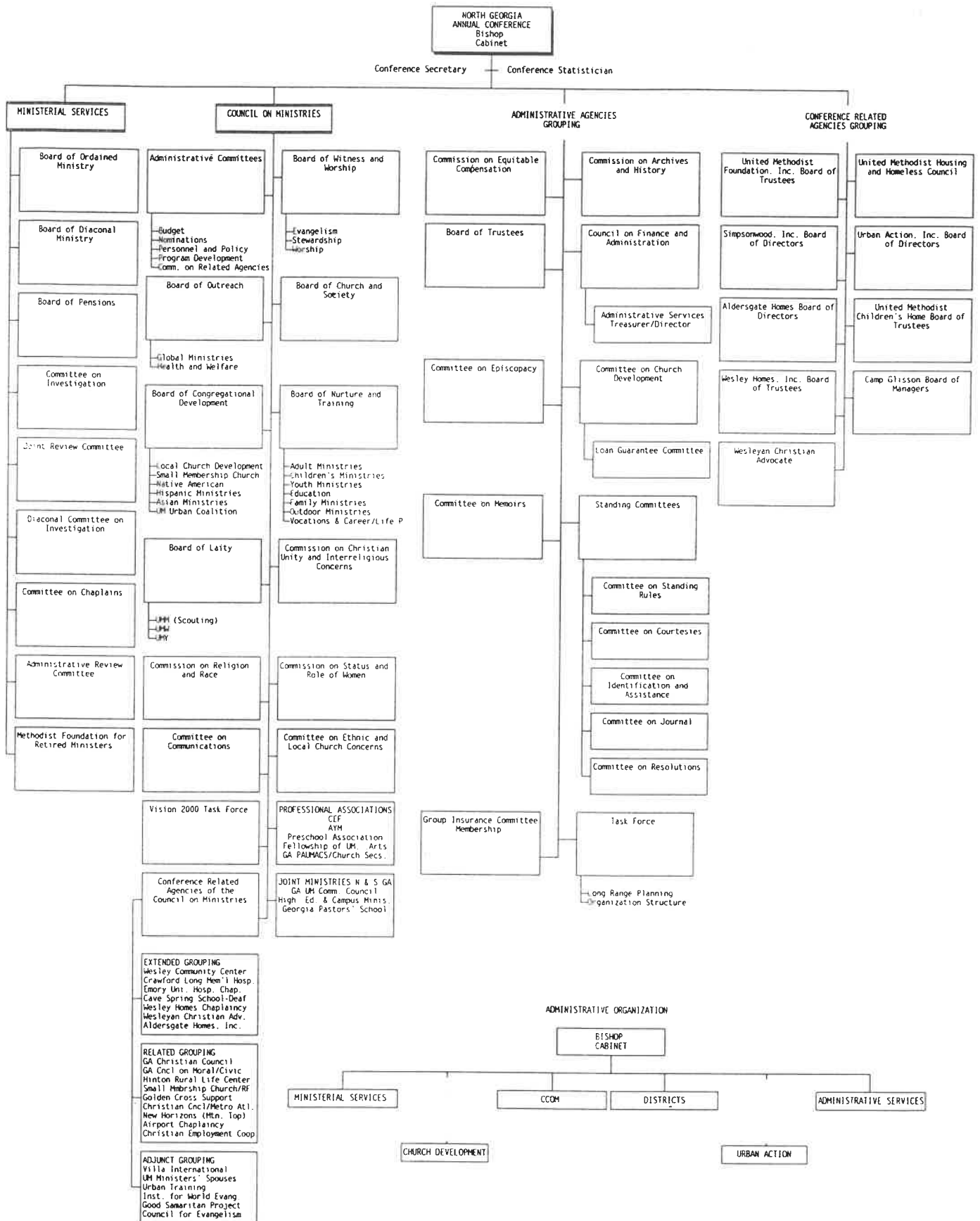
It's June 24, 1995, the fourth Sunday after annual conference. I am the newly appointed pastor of Union Chapel United Methodist Church, located at 264 Fowler Circle, N.E., Marietta, Georgia. As well as having a newly appointed pastor, there was also a newly appointed District Superintendent for the Atlanta-Marietta District, which added insult to injury to a less than united congregation.

When I arrived at Union Chapel in June, there was a "For Sale" sign on the property, advertising the property to be sold. Entering the hallowed walls of Union Chapel, I found the congregation in the midst of making a major decision--whether to remain at their current location or to move to a larger facility (equipped with kitchen, education wing, and larger sanctuary). The less informed members were upset at the possible selling of the property and at unilateral decisions that were made by the previous minister. Many members were going in opposite directions, organization was poor and the church's attitude seemed to be at an all-time low. Some of the members wanted to relocate while others felt there was not a need to

sell because previous ministries were not being carried out at the present location. Yet, the purpose for the move was to have a church equipped for effective community ministry. A Church Relocation Committee was formulated by the prior minister in order to set up guidelines, to purchase new properties and to sell the old (according to the 1992 *Book of Discipline*).

My project was born out of the precept that as the new pastor it was incumbent upon me to look at all aspects of relocating alternatives to do effective ministry. Since the committee had already been established by my predecessor, I took it upon myself to continue to work with the relocation committee, to ascertain where we were in the process of being approved, as well as submitting the information to the local members, the District Superintendent, the District Committee on Building & Relocation, and the Conference Committee on Congregational Development. A diagram of this structure is located on the following page.

The committee members officially delegated as agents of the local church to do business (per charge conference action) on behalf of the church were the finance chair, the trustee chair, and the treasurer (a person with mortgage expertise). For the next twelve weeks, the church relocation committee and I sat down and began to map out strategies as to how we could implement this fact-finding mission without a fall out of members leaving, splitting the church, or sabotaging the project. The first couple of weeks the committee felt the need to update the pastor



and get the District Superintendent involved in the process. It was very necessary to include the District Superintendent because ultimately he would have to send a letter of support for the church to receive funding.

The committee felt that the pastor and the District Superintendent should be given the names and telephone numbers of the agents. They explained the official bids which were previously presented to the church. We discussed pertinent "line items," such as the official offer, what was to be left in the church, contact persons from the proposed buyers, proposed bid for Life's Hope Baptist Church, the realtors' responsibility to the church, the necessity of an earnest fee, what goes into the selling and purchasing of property, how to accept an official bid, and how to write letters of regret.

Issues that were addressed in the next meetings were: (1) the November 16, 1994 Charge Conference Resolution authorizing the committee to do business for Union Chapel; 2) dealing with the conflict within the church family, by establishing strategies to resolve feelings of hostility and injured pride; 3) formulating ideas and brainstorming how to disseminate information to the congregation so they could feel a part of the process. This would prevent glitches or stop gaps that would affect the approval of the move at a later date.

As we began to meet on a regular basis we decided that we should involve additional persons, including four from the trustee board, and a neutral participant who could interface with long-standing members of the congregation.

In our next meeting, we confirmed the date for the pastor, district superintendent, and chair of congregational development to do an on-site visit of Life's Hope Baptist Church, and developed the first draft of the congregational assessment survey. In another committee meeting we evaluated our progress to see if we were focused and staying on task.

The Pastor, District Superintendent, and chairperson of the Conference Council on Congregational Development visited the proposed site on July 20, 1995. We walked through the facilities to assess its potential. The chairperson of the Conference Council on Congregational Development raised the following issues: (1) How old is the facility? (2) What are the demographics? (3) Why is Life's Hope selling? (4) Is there a preventive maintenance plan? (5) Are there any repairs that need to be done? (6) Would Union Chapel consider a merger with another small membership church? (7) What about the possibility of building a new facility? (8) How old and in what condition are the heating and air units? (9) In what condition is the roof? (10) Purchasing of property (develop a plan that can be presented to the District Committee on Building & Church Relocation and Conference Committee on Congregational Development for approval); and (11) the title needs to be insured.

In our next meeting, the pastor reported the results of the on-site visit and the issues raised. She also informed us of the need to develop a plan which would be presented to the District Committee. The pastor presented the second draft of the congregational assessment. Committee members were given the opportunity to

state what changes needed to be made or what needed to be added. The chair of the Relocation Committee was asked to schedule a time when we could worship at the proposed site. All aspects of the purchase of Life's Hope were discussed.

Our next meeting was with the District Committee on Building & Relocation. The agenda was presented and the Chair of the committee presided over the meeting. The agenda was presented for approval, prayer, formal introductions were made and the committee outlined what they wanted in the official proposal. Three possible directions were discussed--a new facility, a new addition, and relocation (all three with the same demographics). A detailed proposal was made to address the following: (1) history and proposed project, (2) letter of support from the district superintendent, (3) elevation and floorplans, (4) cash flow projections, (5) proposed timeline, (6) financing, (7) financials (5 yrs.), (8) goals and objectives, and (9) growth projections (5 yrs.). Upon completion of data collection the committee would reconvene and give us their determination to go on to the next phase. Committee members offered their assurance and assistance.

To keep faith with the members of the congregation and to involve them in the process we felt the need to have a "church chat," which took place after morning worship on October 2, 1995. The pastor encouraged the members to get the issue of relocating out in the open. This would help the committee and pastor to ascertain the real issues and needs concerning the possible move. She reiterated the fact of how important it was to get feelings out in the open and to work in agreement. No

one wanted to hide behind any issues or to shift the issues. Explanation of the congregational assessment and its purpose was the next order of business with allotted time for questions and answers. Members were given the opportunity to voice their opinions and feelings about the process without leaders of the church being defensive. Forty-five copies of the assessment were distributed to the congregation. The members had three weeks to complete and return them to the committee. Eighteen of the forty-five surveys were returned and of the eighteen there was a fifty-fifty split to move or stay.

The following Monday the committee members met to discuss the "church chat." We discussed the committee's feelings concerning our meeting with the District Superintendent and District Committee. Ideas were shared about the research that needed to take place for the development and presentation of an intelligent proposal. There was a brainstorming session to plan a strategy as to who would be responsible for certain sections of the proposal. Further discussion took place regarding the meeting with the District Superintendent.

During our regularly scheduled meeting each committee member reported on his or her section of responsibility. Other items on the agenda were the planning of the worship service scheduled for August 27, 1995, the possibility of leasing our present property to perspective buyers, and the dissemination of the maps to Life's Hope Baptist Church.

On Sunday, August 27, 1995, at 6:30 p.m., we held a Back to School Worship Celebration at Life's Hope Baptist Church to give the members an opportunity to view the facility to get some ideas as to what type of facility they would like to purchase. They were also given the opportunity to ask the members of Life's Hope questions about the facility and why they were selling.

In the ensuing committee meetings, the following items were addressed:

Fellowship at Life's Hope

Information received from telephone conversations with City Hall (street proposal and rezoning, property deeds); architects; contractors; district superintendent; conference personnel

Results of the congregational assessment

To continue or not to continue pursuit of move

How to bring about healing, communicating, and coming together as a family

Continuation of developing the proposal to be presented to the District Committee on Building & Relocation (i.e., cost of new facility, new addition to current facility, and relocating)

Develop Long Range Plan

Removal of "For Sale" sign

Total church community participation

Development of church-community information flyer to send to individual members, sick, shut-ins, posted on bulletin board and hand delivered by members

Planning of two workshops and a planning retreat (September 16, October 14, and November 18, 1995) for the purpose of assessing where we were and our plan to move forward.

After carefully evaluating the church's program areas and ministries, discussing, sresearching, and checking our own documentation (records), we recognized that we were not nearly ready to take on this endeavor. There was a general consensus of the group that more talking, communicating, and fellowshiping with one another needed to take place before we could do this major project. Thus, the decision was to put project relocation on hold. The church decided to go back to the basics to do some healing, organizing, communicating and coming together as a family. We would continue to develop a proposal and present it to the District Committee at a later date once we were organized.

The Process

As stated earlier, the age range of the context associates was from 30 to 78 years of age. These were individuals whose life experiences were varied as well as their educational levels. The educational levels ranged from high school to the Master's degree. The associates were involved in the ongoing mission and ministry of the local churc and some held key leadership positions.

The group consisted of a retired aircraft engine mechanic, a communications business technician, a technical planner, a real estate mortgage adjuster, a school teacher, a parole officer, and a purchasing agent.

The finance chair, trustee chair and treasurer were chosen by the former pastor. Others were chosen to make the group an inclusive and cohesive one, and to effectively make a change in the attitude of the congregation, broadening their awareness of the necessity for a larger facility to do basic ministry.

The committee met continually for twelve consecutive weeks to plan, discuss and evaluate the total ministries of the church. Meetings were held initially every Monday and Wednesday and later alternated to Thursdays and Saturdays to meet the members' work schedules.

We learned how to communicate and assess the pulse of the congregation as it related to moving and doing basic ministry and involving the local community. This resulted in a debate or discussion of the need for us to develop a survey or assessment to measure the congregational attitude toward relocating and to ascertain if we were doing effective ministry.

The enthusiastic response of the context associates helped us to move in the direction of developing the congregational assessment which would be used to measure the opinions of the members regarding a possible move and in what ministries they would like to see the church engaged. The purpose of the congregational assessment was to determine the congregation's attitude toward relocating, get the members' opinions of our proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ in our present location, and ascertain if a larger facility was warranted.

The development of the assessment instrument was the beginning of a collective effort between the context associates and the pastor as a stride toward change and it also challenged the members to a deeper faith development and commitment. We began to learn how to become sounding boards for each other. We would "toss around" ideas and suggestions to see if they were relevant. It was a team effort by all involved.

Our goal was to get the members interested and acclimated to doing ministry and to see if they felt that our current facilities were adequate. It was also our goal and objective to stay connected by communicating, at every phase, what we were doing and the decisions being made; establishing trust, thereby eliciting faith commitments.

Pertinent questions were raised that related to the non-involvement of the young adults, ages 18-25, who were not currently attending worship nor were involved in the program planning. The committee was concerned that faith commitments were not received from these young people, which resulted in the development of strategies to involve them in the ministries of the church and active leadership roles. We also dealt with issues that related to decision making and the necessity of communicating the direction in which the church should move, stating our rationale for this decision.

The committee was seriously concerned with the plight of the congregation at our present facility and the thought of our not providing vital ministries to the community. It was felt that our current facility was inadequate to meet the growing needs and problems of the area in which we are located. The committee believed that if members are committed to the goals and objectives they should be given the responsibility of motivating others and must start or fan the flame that is within themselves.

The associates verbalized their fears and concerns about financing a move and the commitment of members to retire the debt. Another concern was the congregation's desire to do effective evangelism, inviting newcomers and long-term members to acquaint and re-acquaint themselves to Christ.

The committee became aware of and addressed issues that related to opposition and possible sabotage, and the need to learn how to constructively resolve conflicts within the church family. Learning how to manage conflict helps the ambiance of the congregation.

After carefully evaluating the church's financial records, members' attendance and giving, longevity of the current members, the potential for growth, and the current ambiance of the congregation, it was the consensus of the group that we needed to build up the confidence level of the members and learn how to share and appreciate each other before contemplating a major move or undertaking a major project. It was decided that we would continuously seek to employ

techniques that will give members the opportunity to take ownership and feel a part of the process.

CHAPTER V

THE REPLICABLE MODEL

When you have been appointed a new pastor and/or district superintendent there are steps that one needs to employ when making any major decisions in the life of the congregation. These steps are outlined below.

I. Communication

A. Discuss pertinent information as it relates to the official business of the church, allowing two to three weeks to view all documents.

1. What goes into the selling and purchasing of property
2. Contact persons of proposed buyers
3. Official offer for proposed site
4. Realtors' responsibility to the church
5. Necessity of an earnest fee
6. Official offers from proposed buyers
7. What is to be left in both the churches selling/buying
8. How to accept an official bid
9. How to write letters of regret
10. Discussion of the importance of learning how to do emotional distancing from hot issues and become an objective leader
11. Self-awareness concepts and its relevancy in decision making

B. Discussion of issues relating to unrest among the congregation

1. Resolutions that pertain to authorization given to persons to conduct business in the name of the church

2. Learning strategies of how to recognize and confront opposition in the church family
3. Brainstorming of effective communication techniques to involve the total church community to establish trust and faith with the believers
4. Concepts in decision making (learning how to voice opinions and backing off to allow congregants to make theirs without outside influence or coaching)
5. Recognition of the importance of staying connected

II. Assessment/Evaluation

- A. Discussion and assessment of the possible need to involve additional persons for cohesiveness
- B. Evaluation of proposed site
 1. Evaluation of the proposed site
 2. Development of congregational assessment (2 or 3 weeks for revisions of the assessment before dissemination)
- C. Checkup: Review goals to assess progress and focus of task
 1. Celebration of the progress made in setting goals and development of the congregational assessment survey
- D. Actual walk through of proposed site by all pertinent parties

III. Reporting and discussion meetings

- A. Discussion of proposed property (staying connected and letting the laity know what has taken place)
- B. Results of visit to proposed property (programming feedback to members, voicing opinions about facility)
- C. Worshiping at the proposed site (giving members the opportunity to assess the facility to make an informed decision)

- IV. Meeting with General Church Officials
 - A. Strategies and concepts of learning how to stay connected, and establishing trust with the general church
 - B. Outlining of necessary data needed for approval and funding
 - C. Support from governing bodies of the church
- V. Eliciting support from the total congregation (communication strategies to establish trust with the community of faith and help them remain faithful to their commitments)
 - A. "Church Chat"
 - B. Newsletter
 - C. Flyers
 - D. Telephoning (pro-active communication--how to top the gossip curve)
- VI. Accountability
 - A. Phase evaluations
 - B. Strategy evaluations
 - C. New concepts
- VII. Strategies for developing proposal
 - A. Goal setting and reestablishing the vision
 - B. Researching
 - C. Committee assignments
 - D. Brainstorming

VIII. Report Card (celebration of efforts and planning strategies)

- A. Retreats
- B. Seminars
- C. Workshops

IX. The Finale

- A. The decision
- B. Celebration and plan of action

CHAPTER VI

RESULTS OF THE MODEL

The first objective of this project was to help the leaders of the congregation to reach a decision of whether to move or not to move; secondly, to encourage members to remain faithful during this transitional period; and thirdly, to acknowledge and experience what it actually takes to make formal decisions in preparing to move, build or relocate. The experience in this fact-finding endeavor was a means by which the leadership of the congregation could be empowered, actualize their faith and build their self-esteem. This endeavor helped each of us to understand what it is to value each person's ideas and opinions and look at various alternatives to facilitate change without actually splitting the church, to challenge God, or put God to the test and to take an inward journey ourselves, asking what is actually happening within us and the life of the church that hinders us from doing effective ministry.

To measure the change in attitude a pre-assessment was distributed at the onset of the project and a post-assessment was conducted at the end of the project. The experience helped us to become aware of what little we knew about developing, implementing and carrying out procedures for a major undertaking as a move. We realized that if informal and formal assessments had been developed in the

beginning many issues would not have surfaced nor would there have been animosity or adversity among the members. As we began to dissect the process and take one step at a time, we realized how unprepared and unorganized we were in completing the process at this point in time. In the process, the group became more aware about group dynamics and what had to take place before proceeding further.

The understanding of faith, God and God's interaction play an important role in all major undertakings. God's sustaining power when it is felt that all hope is gone is also vital to any endeavor.

The members realized the importance of taking a deeper look at the total ministries of the church, seeing what we are doing, evaluating our effectiveness, and servicing the community. Other important facts that the members realized during this process were:

1. It is necessary for evaluation at various intervals of the project.
 - a. Sometimes the results of the evaluation mean starting over.
 - b. Sometimes strategies to facilitate the project have to be changed.
2. There is a need to develop long range goals and objectives.
 - a. Evaluating to see if the committee is on task.
 - b. Planning on how to get back on course when the committee has wavered.
3. There is a need to involve all members.
 - a. Keeping members informed and working together.
 - b. Celebrating at various stages of the process.

I feel as though we failed to involve each member of the congregation because we failed to initiate the phone tree, send postal card reminders, or to impress upon the members that we valued their participation in the process. A disadvantage to this project was that it took immediately after the new pastor was appointed to the charge, which did not give members enough time to get to know the pastor or establish trust.

CHAPTER VII

REFLECTIONS AND PROJECTIONS OF THE MODEL

Being the new pastor and fairly new in the ministry, I had my job cut out for me when I arrived at Union Chapel. I do not have a problem with working in the church or working with members, but it was like going through a maze to see which direction we should take. Union Chapel, being a church that has poor self-esteem and a lack of faith in the system, at this time, felt that the conference had done an injustice to them again, sending them a "rookie" (my first full-time appointment), another Doctor of Ministry student, and to add insult to injury, a new District Superintendent. They were now wondering, what else will they do to us?

It was not a good feeling walking into a powder keg that was about to explode. Generally, it takes me at least six months to get to know the people and to learn their personalities, to see what programming is taking place, and try to decide what my vision will be for the church. However, this assignment was different. The District Superintendent asked me to focus on the move and to gather all pertinent data relative to the move, to see if we were in sync with the annual conference, and to see if we had gotten approval from the District Committee. To do this meant that it was impossible for me to develop a new project to complete my doctorate of ministry studies. Basically, I felt that since no one seemed to have any clue as to

how to handle such a unique situation, it would be beneficial to develop a manual for pastors and congregations who may endeavor to take on major projects. The manual would be a handbook addressing preliminary questions and the necessary procedural guidelines to follow prior to making final decisions.

It was surprising to find out from pastors with whom I consulted that none of them knew of anyone, who had a similar situation, who could share with me. Therefore, the model helped me to come to grips with what I did know and did not know about procedural guidelines that we needed to follow relating to the general church, city and state government. I had to quickly become an adept leader and search day to day for answers to questions.

We discovered, when we took an in-depth look at the total program at Union Chapel that there was little or no participation by the parishioners. We saw the need to go back to the drawing board and develop goals and objectives to do basic ministry. Union Chapel had a vision statement, but the members and the pastor did not have the opportunity to develop a plan of action to implement the programs and assign tasks. In other words, we had a vision statement but we were not actualizing our faith nor were we bringing it to fruition. We lacked organization, communication, strategies for conflict resolution and training.

This project broadened our perspective on the necessity to impart the vision to all, to elicit participation of all congregants, realize the value of discussing, inviting and listening to the opinions of others. Through discussions and

brainstorming sessions we were able to determine the following issues: What we wanted in a new facility, the style facility we wanted, what type of ministries and activities to implement, how much we will budget, cost to have an architect construct a model, how and when will we retire the debt, the time frame (beginning and end), and what were our long-range plans for ministry (implementation).

In the life of the congregation through moves, changes, and transitions to actualize our faith, there are searching questions that we need to ask ourselves that relate to the total vision of the church:

1. Now that we have a new pastor, will our vision be the same or will there be a new statement?
2. What does our vision statement really say?
3. What does it mean for members and congregants to daily walk with God?
4. What does it mean in the life of the congregation, community, and society?
5. What do we believe the church can do?
6. What is our true desire?
7. What is our commitment?
8. What is it that we want God to do and help us to do?
9. How big do we want to become (i.e., membership)?
10. How large of a budget can we support?
11. How will we achieve our goals?

12. Do we need to go back and review our vision statement and establish a new one from where we are now?

Whatever the questions may be we have to keep in mind that we think individually, however we must collaborate as a group. As I had to learn, we must accept, we are all different. Our faith grows at different intervals. We mature at various ages. So does the church. Therefore, members of the congregation must be willing and able to trust each other, thereby allowing the Holy Spirit to empower us.

Prior to ministry I was afraid to open up for people to see the real me. I am learning openly to state my views, beliefs, opinions and ideas without feeling apprehensive or paranoid. I realize from my own life that to remain faithful in change we must have an open mind to God's leading direction and not look at changes, obstacles as merely negative, but look at them as opportunities to learn and become stronger.

Through effective leadership principles, the church is able to free itself to learn how to laugh, plan, organize, and resolve conflict without feeling guilty or remorseful. The members can seek new means of relating and discussing pertinent issues relating to themselves and the life of the church.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1

Congregational Assessment

Please return assessment to the Church Relocation Committee or to the Pastor.

Place a check mark (x) next to the appropriate item. Choose only one answer for each question. The following information about you will help in interpreting the results of this study.

1. Name of Church: Union Chapel United Methodist Church
Address: 264 Fowler Circle, N. E.
City, State, Zip: Marietta, GA 30060
Phone: (404) 427-6251
2. My gender: 1)____Male 2)____Female
3. My age group: 1)___10-15 2)___16-21 3)___22-35
4)___36-55 5)___56 & up
4. Are you retired? 1) Yes ___ 2) No ___
5. Marital Status? 1) Married ___ 2) Single/never married ___
3) Separated ___ 4) Divorced ___
5) Single/widowed ___
6. How many years have you been a member of or a regular participant in this congregation? _____
7. Do you have a leadership role in the church? 1) Yes ___ 2) No ___
8. Transportation: 1) car ___ 2) bus ___ 3) taxi ___ 4) friend ___

9. Residency: 1) Marietta ____ 2) Smyrna ____ 3) Mableton ____
 4) Kennesaw ____ 5) Powder Springs ____ 6) Other ____

Please specify _____

10. What type of ministries/programs would you like to see the church do?

11. Where do you currently see the church as it relates to in/outreach ministries?

12. Do you feel that we are doing effective ministry now with our current facilities? 1) No ____ 2) Yes ____

13. Do you feel that a more spacious facility would increase effectiveness of our ministry? 1) No ____ 2) Yes ____

14. If a new facility is obtained would you be willing to make a financial pledge toward retiring the debt? 1) No ____ 2) Yes ____

15. Would you be willing to work in one or more of the following areas: Sunday school, children's church, nursery worker, lead worship, outreach (evangelism, knocking on doors, and inviting people to come and worship), or participate in the choir? 1) No ____ 2) Yes ____

The following question addresses the possibility of our relocating. Do you think?

- a. It is a good idea? 1) Yes ____ 2) No ____

If no, please make a brief statement as to why you feel as though this might not be a good idea.

- b. Would you help shoulder the financial burden if we should decide to relocate? ___Yes ___No

The following questions deal with our participation in religious activities. Please circle the number (0, 1, 2, 3, or 4) which best represents the frequency of your willingness to participate.

	<u>Never</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Quite Often</u>	<u>Often</u>
	0	1	2	3	4
How often will you be willing to:					
1. Attend worship services	0	1	2	3	4
2. Attend Sunday School class	0	1	2	3	4
3. Become involved in Prayer/ Bible Study/Sharing Group	0	1	2	3	4

The following questions deal with your involvement in religious organizations. Please circle the number (0, 1, 2, 3, or 4) which best represents your involvement.

	None	One	Two	Three/ Four	More
	0	1	2	3	4

Will you be willing to get involved:

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. In church organizations, committees, and/or groups | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. In religious organizations and/or groups beyond the local church | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. With church members: of your four closest friends, how many of them are church members | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

In what areas of communication do you feel that the church can improve, i.e., more information in worship bulletins, regular church chats, or distributing monthly surveys?

The following questions deal with your general church activity. Please circle one answer for each question.

1. Approximately how much time will you be willing to spend during the course of an AVERAGE MONTH in all church activities? Please circle the number of hours you spend.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 or more

2. Are you willing to take a more active role in the decision making process of the church? Please circle 1 for very low, 6 for very high, or 2, 3, 4, 5 for other degrees of response.

Very
Low

1

2

3

4

5

Very
High

6

3. Would you increase your present level of financial giving to the church? Please circle one of the following responses.

5% 10% 20% 30% or _____%

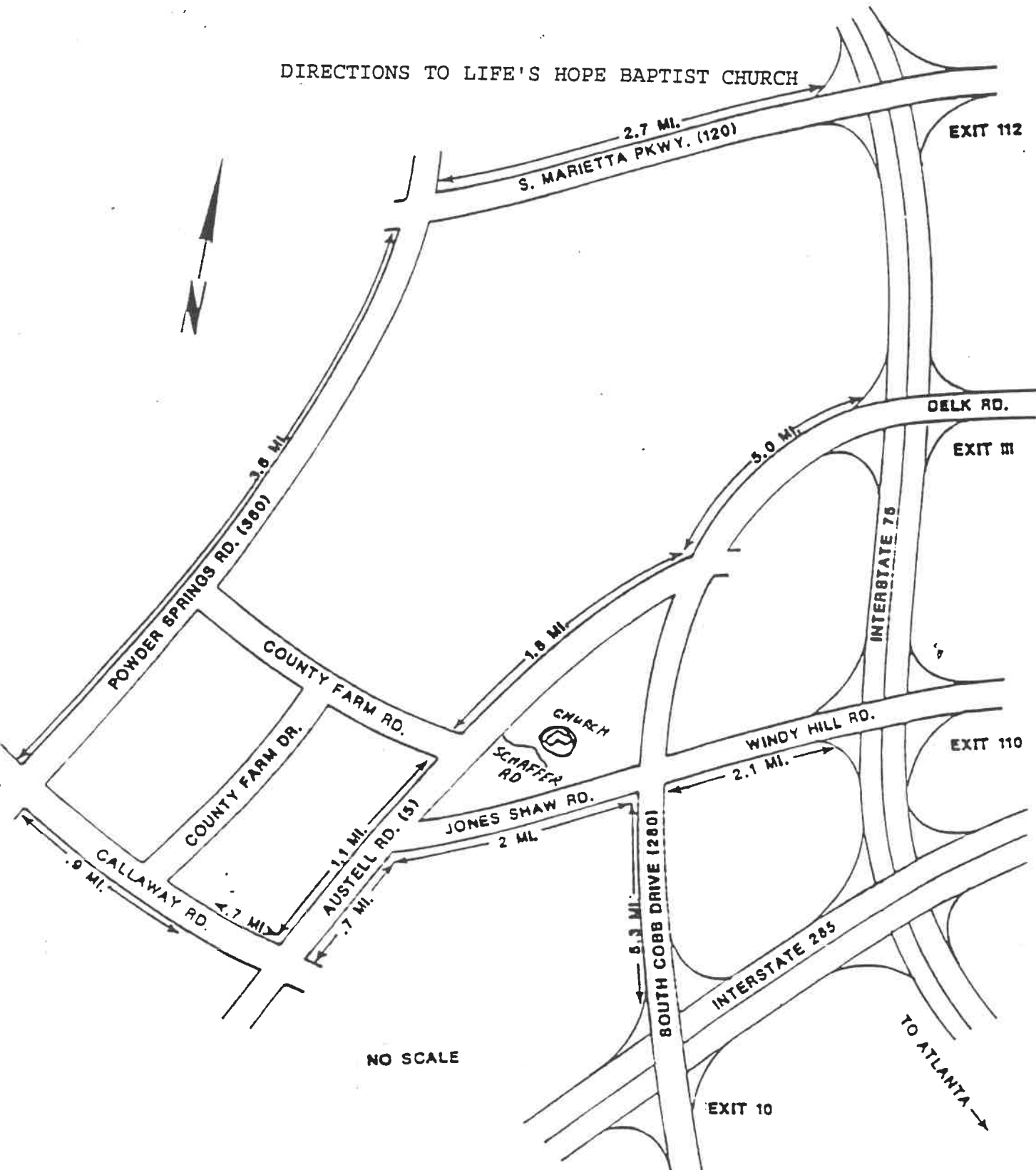
Church Missional Opportunities: In keeping with our church vision statement, how would you prioritize the following, letting 1 be the top priority and 6 being the lowest, or 2, 3, 4, 5 for other priorities.

1. Set a goal for membership growth? ____% ____
2. Improve our church's outreach to young adults, youth, and elderly? ____
3. Improve our church's ministry to persons with disabilities? ____
4. Encourage members to understand and act on the relationship of the Christian faith to social, political and economic issues? ____
5. Sharing the Good News of the Gospel with the unchurched? ____
6. Help members to encounter God in serving persons? ____

Thank you.

Appendix 2

DIRECTIONS TO LIFE'S HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH



*Atlanta Marietta District
Board of Church Location & Building Committee*

AGENDA

August 3, 1995

I. The Meeting Begins:

Mr. Chuck Cook will open our meeting with prayer.

Introductions of all members of the Union Chapel United Methodist Church and the members of the District Board of Church Location and Building Committee.

A look at some miscellaneous items which includes: a list of the members of the Committee... our next meeting... and any others that need to be raised...

II. The Sharing of Plans:

Members of the Union Chapel United Methodist Church will share with us some plans that they have developed for their Church.

Also, time will be spent looking at questions that are raised by both members of the Church and members of the District Board of Church Location and Building Committee.

III. Decisions and Directions:

If any decisions or directions are asked for, the Committee will discuss these and then share their conclusions.

IV. Meeting Adjourned:

UNION CHAPEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Special Celebration at Life Hope
August 27, 1995
6:30 p.m.
PASTOR MACIE B. KING

* CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Who shall shout for joy to the Lord our God?

P: Who shall find refuge in the arms of our God?

L: They who hear and heed the voice of the Lord.

P: They who learn and walk in the ways of the Lord.

L: From the love of God they shall never be separated.

P: Though they travel the world, they shall not be alone!

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION:

Yesterday and today and forever, all the peoples are yours, O Lord. As one day in your sight is a thousand years, so one life in your sight is a multitude.

O God, be present with us, as you are with all; be present now, as you are forever. To you we offer ourselves, as individuals and as a body; to you we open ourselves, this and every day.

* LITANY

L: The hand of the Lord has touched your lips, putting God's word in your mouth. What have you heard with the ears of your heart? What are you sent to proclaim?

W: *The word of the Lord has come to us, saying, "My people have indicted me, charging that I have forsaken them:*

M: "To this I reply, in anger and sorrow: Is it not you who have forsaken me?"

W: *"You who approach me with prayers on your lips, while your wandering spirit is far away;*

M: "You, who do no wrong under cover of night, thinking, "Who will be out and about now to see?"

W: *"You, who make plans, though the plans are not mine;*

M: "You, who do good--for those who repay?"

W: *"Despite your sin, you judge the world and declare that you are innocent,*

M: "And your pride digs a canyon between earth and heaven, accusing your God of guilt and transgression!"

W: *"Can you not see what a horrible thing is happening upon the earth?"*

M: "Your prophets prophesy falsely, and your people heed their words;

W: *"Your leaders take you down the terrible paths, and you are content to follow!"*

M: "Tell me, you stubborn and rebellious people: What will you do when the end comes?"

A: *"Yes, what will you do in the end?"*

* PRAISE AND WORSHIP

WELCOME/GREETINGS

OFFERING

SONG OF PRAISE

PRAYER

SONG OF PRAISE

SCRIPTURE:

Psalm 71: 1-6
Hebrews 12: 18-29

Jeremiah 1: 4-10
Luke 13: 10-17

THE WORD

BENEDICTION

*** Please stand.**
L: Leader
P: People
W: Women
M: Men
A: ALL

**1995 Council on Ministries
Planning Workshop**

**September 16, 1995
8:00 - 11:00
Union Chapel Parsonage**

AGENDA

- 8:00 Breakfast
- 8:30 "Opening...Our Hearts and Minds for God's Plans!"
- 8:45 "Survey...Results!"
- 9:00 "Your Work Area/Ministry...How is it Going?"
- 9:30 "Your Work Area/Ministry...What is the Next Step?"
- 10:00 Break
- 10:10 "Our Tentative Plans for 1996; Scheduling of Next Retreat"
- 11:00 "Sending Us Forth...to Do God's Work!"

**Union Chapel United Methodist Church
Planning Retreat
November 18, 1995
8:00 - 11:00**

AGENDA

8:00 Gathering

8:25 "Opening ... Our Hearts and Minds for God's Plans!"

8:35 Purpose

Setting Theme for "96"

Focus for 1996: Work Areas

1. Worship
2. Education: Christian Education, Leadership Training, and Stewardship
3. Children & Youth Ministries
4. Older Adult Ministries

8:45 Define Goals and Objectives for:

1. Worship
2. Education

9:30 Break

9:40 Define Goals and Objectives for:

3. Children & Youth Ministries
4. Older Adult Ministries

10:30 Planning of 1996 Calendar of Activities:

1. Setting of dates
2. Events
3. Times
4. Persons to be contacted
5. Naming of person (s) in charge of activity

11:00 "Sending us Forth...to Do God's Work!"

The Vision

Union Chapel is a center of refuge for spiritual renewal where the unadulterated Word of God is taught and applied to daily living in order to: transform lives and challenge systems and structures that seek to oppress and deny human hope, empower people by demonstrating God's love, and inspire human hope and renewed strength through the power of the Holy Spirit in order to proclaim now as the acceptable year of the Lord.

**Church Relocation Committee
Information Flyer**

October 2, 1995

Dear Members:

This letter comes as a means to inform you of the process and where the church relocation is, as it pertains to the gathering of information to be presented to the District Committee on Building and Relocation.

In order to familiarize you with the process, we will begin by stating that it was the duty of this committee to bring the pastor and district superintendent up to date as to what has actually taken place in the last year here at Union Chapel. The committee informed the district superintendent and me (July 5 and June 25, 1995) as to what bids and procedures had been followed and voted upon in Charge Conference. This was held on November 16, 1994. Minutes of that meeting can be seen for further details as to what transpired.

On July 20, 1995, the pastor met with the District Superintendent and Charles Barnes (chairperson of conference congregational development) to visit Life's Hope Baptist Church, primarily to walk through the facilities to observe and assess as a potential location for us to purchase. Various questions were raised and these questions will need to be answered when we present a detailed proposal to the District Committee for approval.

On August 3, 1995, the District Committee on Building and Relocation met with the pastor, district superintendent, and the church's relocation committee to ascertain as to what we will need to present to the district committee. The Committee basically stated that they would like to see a detailed proposal of at least three possible directions in which the church could move. Each area presented must have a rationale for and against each concept.

On August 10, 1995, the pastor met with Dan Brown, the chairperson of the District Committee, to get some clearer understanding on how to develop the proposal and to get some feedback on the congregational assessment to be distributed.

August 27, the congregation worshipped at Life's Hope Baptist Church. Members were given the opportunity to view the facilities and to get an idea as to what type of facilities we would like to have. The district superintendent and his wife, members of Life's Hope and members of our congregation joined in the worship celebration.

September 9, the church relocation committee met and decided that we would not at this time continue to pursue the idea of relocating, but would like to focus on healing, communicating, and coming together as a family. However, we will also continue to develop a proposal to present to the district committee on building and relocation. This proposal will focus on three areas: 1) new addition to the current facility, 2) cost of new facility, and 3) relocating. In other words, this proposal will be presented to them as a long-range plan for Union Chapel Church. We will seek to correlate all pertinent data to present to all members of the congregation for discussion and approval. We will once again hand out a questionnaire for your input and involvement.

Currently, it is the consensus of the entire church body that healing and restoration need to take place. We are seeking means by which we can begin the process and endeavor to bring all God's children home. If we cannot come to our own church and find healing and reconciliation, where can we go? Let us begin again to be about our **FATHER'S BUSINESS**.

Oh, by the way the "FOR SALE" SIGN is down.

This committee is endeavoring to do the **LORD'S WILL**, and asking God to give us direction. We are seeking to listen and hear **His Voice**. **Continue to Pray for Us!!** We pray that this information is beneficial and helpful to all concerned.

May God's richest blessings be upon you and yours.

Your Sisters and Brothers in Christ,
The Union Chapel Church Relocation Committee

Rev. Macie B. King, Pastor

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